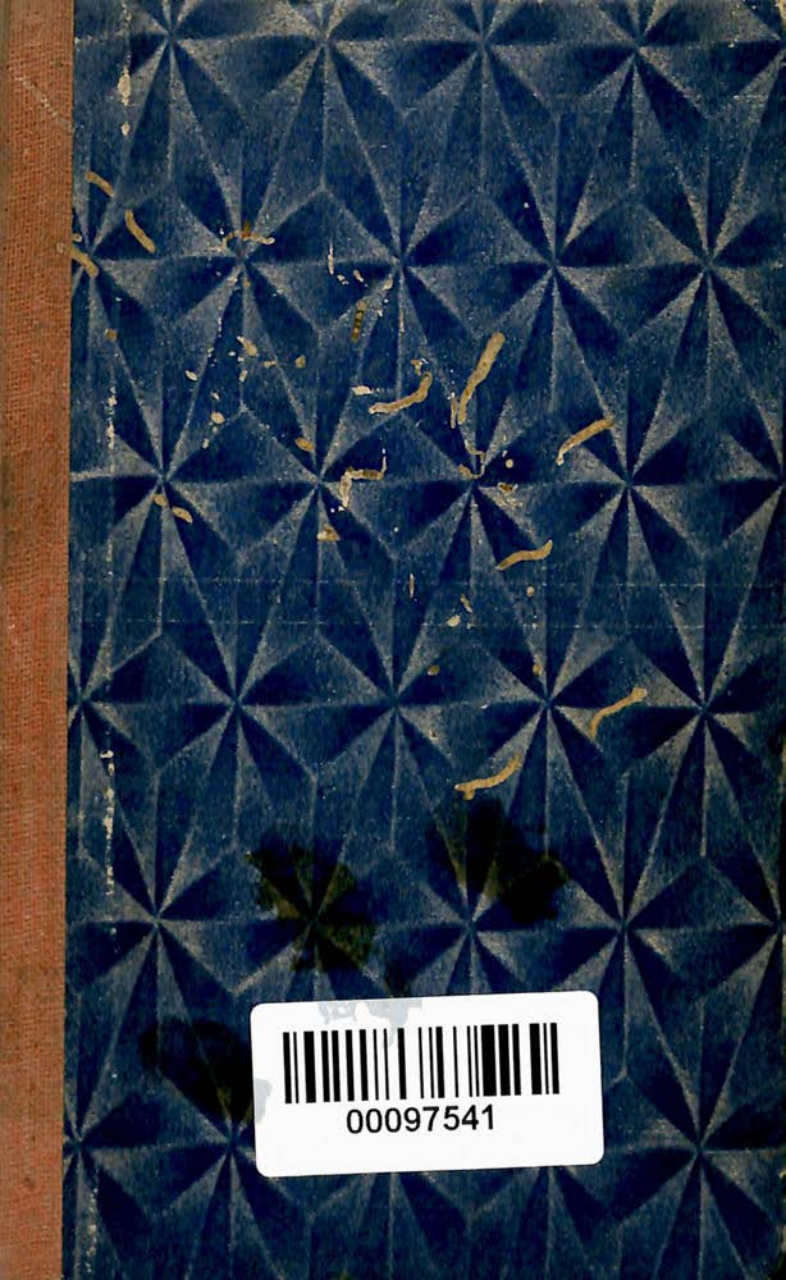
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MATTINS AND MUTTON'S;

OR,

THE BEAUTY OF BRIGHTON.

A Love Story.

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BY

CUTHBERT BEDE,

AUTHOR OF "VERDANT GREEN;" "SHARPE AND DEARER," ETC. ETC. ETC.

VOL. II.

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MATTINS AND MUTTON'S;

OR,

THE BEAUTY OF BRIGHTON.

CHAPTER I.

EVENSONG.

"DON'T you find, Miss Hardy, that this quiet street is rather too noisy for comfort?" asked Edgar, as the riding-master and his bevy of pupils cantered up the street and aroused its clattering echoes. "We almost need speaking-trumpets to make ourselves heard. The everlasting niggers are a frightful nuisance and a drawback to the place. But I suppose that we must expect disappointments at Brighton as well as elsewhere, and must not be surprised at the sands turning out to be shingle, and the pretty girls at Mutton's the reverse of beautiful. Do you patronise Mutton's?"

"Sometimes," said Miss Hardy.

"When she doesn't patronise Mattins," said Miss Galloway. But, seeing that her friend looked somewhat hurt, she dexterously changed the conversation. "Oh, Mr. Melladew, we have been plotting against you."

"A plot against me! What can it be?"

"Why, if you cannot get a great old-fashioned family coach from Silverthorne's, we shall have to divide forces. We want to have a drive—the usual trundle from Adelaide Crescent to Kemp Town and back again; and a Brighton fly won't hold four ladies and one on the box; and then where would you be, unless you rode postilion or sat bodkin? It would never do; we should be taken up for cruelty to animals. So you must get two flies, and we three girls can ride in one, and you can do the honours in the other."

But when Mrs. Melladew was appealed to she said that she would prefer the drive postponed to the next day, as she had not quite got over her travelling and the motion of the railway, and she would wish to keep quiet that afternoon and not do more than go down to the beach, and there sit awhile on one of the public seats. This was

agreed to; it was settled that the same party should assemble for a drive on the following afternoon, and Miss O'Fay volunteered to bear Mrs. Melladew company on the beach, the while the three younger ladies and Edgar Melladew strolled about in their vicinity.

The two elderly ladies avoided the seats on the promenade, where they would be in the midst of whirl and clatter, and sought one of those double seats placed on the beach near to the pleasant green that extends from Brunswick Terrace to Adelaide Crescent, within which space is the handsomest portion of the sea front of Brighton, or, to speak strictly, of Hove, for the toll-house at the eastern end of the green marks the division between Hove and Brighton. But as the suburb is merged in the metropolis, so Hove is comprehended in Brighton, and the splendid ranges of palatial buildings erected in Hove are not surpassed even by their magnificent Kemp Town brethren at the opposite extremity of Brighton. A double drive and roadway, divided by palisades, immediately fronts this range of semi-palaces; to this succeeds the wide promenade and the gently-sloping green, surrounded and intersected

by footpaths. Then comes the beach, with many vessels and boats hauled upon its shingle; and the western detachment of bathing machines, where the bathing is certainly somewhat more private than on the range of beach opposite the Bedford.

Here, for the next hour, with their faces seaward, sat Mrs. Melladew and Miss O'Fay, whiling away the time in agreeable converse. They had much in common, and on religious topics were quite of one mind; so, as the phrase is, they got on together admirably; and if Edgar and his sister esteemed themselves fortunate in making the acquaintance of Miss Hardy, their mother was equally pleased that a happy train of circumstances had favoured her with the companionship of so excellent and sensible a person as Miss O'Fay.

"I have a very dear friend," said the little lady, "who is now staying for a short time at Brighton, which, indeed, was one of the inducements I had in coming here; I refer to Mrs. Grimsby Grout. Do you happen to know her?"

Mrs. Melladew had not that pleasure.

"Her acquaintance is indeed a pleasure and a

privilege," said Miss O'Fay, "for she is a real Christian, who knows where to place her trust. She is expecting a visit from that good and Gospel-loving man, the Rev. Micaiah Mowle of Clapham, from whose ministrations I formerly reaped rich sheaves of blessing. You have probably heard of him in connection with the missions to the lost tribes?"

Mrs. Melladew, with some little shame, was compelled to confess that she had lived in ignorance not only of such a reverend gentleman, but also of the missions with which he was specially connected. But Melladew, she pleaded in excuse, was so out of the world that she was frequently in darkness as to many matters that would otherwise possess an absorbing interest for her; and although their rector, Mr. Pordage, was a truly excellent person, yet he never busied himself to bring missionary claims before them, except in a very general way; and of course they could not expect the curate to do much, although she must say that Mr. Ansley was a very well-disposed young man; and if he possessed a name that should lead people to imagine that he was connected with the Mountnorris Annesleys, she

supposed that he was not to blame, and that it must be considered to be more his misfortune than his fault. But perhaps Miss O'Fay would be so good as to enlighten her concerning the Rev. Micaiah Mowle and the mission that he was connected with.

As nothing could give the little lady greater pleasure than to do this for a willing listener, she at once complied with Mrs. Melladew's request, and gave such an account of the esteemed Clapham minister that her companion conceived a very high estimate of him, and considered Mrs. Grimsby Grout exceedingly fortunate in having such a favoured individual for her temporary guest.

"She has kindly invited us," said the little lady, "to a Bible tea on Tuesday next; and if you would desire to be there, I think that I may safely say Mrs. Grimsby Grout will be glad to see you. I will, at any rate, with your permission, communicate with her, and she will doubtless send you a note of invitation."

"That would be particularly kind of you; I should greatly wish to go," said Mrs. Melladew, who, however, did not quite know what might be

the entertainment to which she was thus pledging herself. She had heard of, and wondered at, a dancing tea; but a Bible tea was a novelty to her.

"It would be very improving to Miss Melladew, I am sure," said Miss O'Fay, "as I trust it will be to my niece, who, I am sorry to say—" But at this juncture the young lady in question came very near to them, together with her two companions; so the little lady lowered her voice to a confidential half-whisper, in which an acute listener might have detected the words, "tendency to High Church—Anglo-Catholics—St. Paul's—Mattins—Popery in disguise—St. Michael's—quite dreadful—flowers and candlesticks—incense—confessional," and others of a similar nature, which would have been quite sufficient to show the drift of Miss O'Fay's conversation and Protestant proclivities.

Then Miss Galloway left them, and the four others turned back to their respective quarters in Cliff Place, with the understanding that they were to meet for a drive on the following afternoon, in which party Miss Galloway had requested to be included.

After dinner Edgar strolled out, bidding them not to wait tea for him, as he might perhaps take a cigar on the beach, or go into the theatre and see the "Octoroon." But as he turned the corner of the street he saw the figure of a veiled young lady, who looked so exceedingly like Miss Hardy that he had the curiosity to follow her. The bells of St. Paul's were chiming for the evening service, or rather, as it is there called, "Evensong, at 7.30 p.m.;" and the young lady kept steadily on her way, taking the direction from whence the melody of the bells proceeded. Edgar followed her at a respectful distance, and soon found himself within the spacious lean-to that serves as the porch for St. Paul's Church. As the young lady entered she threw back her veil, and revealed the face of Miss Hardy, as Edgar had surmised. She went up the church without seeing him, and he followed her for a short distance, and then took his seat.

After the service he loitered in the porch, looking at the two frescoes, until Miss Hardy came up. A smile lighted up her face as she suddenly recognized him, as though she was pleased to see him, especially in such a place. "Were you at

the service?" she asked, and received an affirmative reply. "Did you like it?" she then asked, somewhat eagerly.

This time there came a hesitating "Ye-es," followed by a doubtful "not altogether." Then he added, as she turned to the right into the end of a narrow court, "Pray allow me to see you safe home."

"Thanks: this is the shorter way. But what did you not like?"

"In the first place, I did not like the dresses of the clergymen. I missed the old-fashioned surplice. The long black cassock down to the heels, with the scanty linen garment hanging over it, but only reaching as far as the knee, is too evidently an imitation of the Romish priest's dress. And the scarf, or stole as I suppose it is called, was worked with a gold cross at the back and on the ends."

"But the vestments of the priests, like everything else about a church, are symbolical," pleaded Miss Hardy, who would have been glad to have said more than she now ventured to say, had her acquaintance with Edgar Melladew been of longer standing. In her eyes all things per-

taining to the church and its services had a highly significant character, and the ignorance that prevailed regarding them she looked upon as one great cause of the grievous lack of true personal religion. Miss O'Fay traced this to other sources, and could not be led to imagine that there was any special meaning either in a surplice or in a chancel. The rubrics of King Edward's first book were to her as unknown as they were uncared for; and the chancel was a portion of the church wherein school children, or any one else for whom there was room, might be accommodated. The niece, on the other hand, thought that the rochet, alb, tunicles, and other vestments were not matters of no moment; and that when her aunt admired the archbishop's cope in Leslie's picture of the Queen's coronation, she was unconsciously directing her attention to the subject of eucharistic vestments,—a phrase at which Miss O'Fay would have taken fright. And to Miss Hardy the nave of the church stood for a representation of the church militant, while the chancel was the type of the church triumphant, in which none should sit but the priests and choir, clothed in white, like the saints around the

throne; and where too was the altar, the approach to which was to be regarded as the nearest approach to heaven that could be made by any one while on earth, and whose cross and lights signified Him who was the true Light and died upon the cross."

In Miss Hardy's eyes the ritualistic services at such a church as St. Paul's—or rather, as it is the High-Church fashion to write it, S. Paul's—were full of soul and meaning. There were the early and mid-day celebrations, the Mattins and the Evensong. There were the blessings and increased privileges to be derived from an open church and frequent eucharistic services. There was the church, every day and all day, inviting the business-driven man to a retirement which he could so seldom find out of it, and which would both hallow his petitions and intensify his devotions. There was the service of worship and instruction; the worship consisting of the fourfold sacrifice of prayer—praise and thanksgiving—alms—and the remembrance of the Great Sacrifice on Calvary; and the instruction imparted by the lessons and by preaching. There was the penitential service of the Litany, said

from the low stool outside the chancel, to show that whilst confessing their sins, men were alike unworthy of admission into their Maker's presence. There was the appeal from the outward to the inward sense by the sights and sounds presented to the eye and ear—the carved work and ornaments, the lights and stained glass, the vestments and flowers, the pealing anthems and chanted psalms, when she heard—

> "The storm their high-built organs make,
> And thunder-music, rolling shake
> The prophets blazoned on the panes."

To Miss O'Fay the St. Paul's Mattins and Evensong were nothing more than histrionic services at "the opera church," where it offended her to hear—

> "The snowy-banded dilettante,
> Delicate-handed priest, intone."

There was mummery, in her eyes, in the posturings and genuflections, in the dresses and decorations, in the uprising of the congregation at the processional entrance of surpliced priests and choristers, in the closing of the chancel gates, in the surpliced priest facing round to the altar

at the end of his sermon with his intoned ascription—in every part and portion, in short, of the service; and after two visits, she could not again be induced to accompany her niece thither. The severity of her ultra-protestantism could not brook this "imitative popery," as she termed it; and it was with great sorrow that she perceived her niece's fondness for, and evident appreciation of, the "histrionic services" of St. Paul's. Excessive ritualism was regarded by Miss O'Fay as the sign of the half-way house to Rome; and the little lady's own inclinations tended more in the direction of Geneva.

But if any excuse was needed for Miss Hardy's conduct, it might have been found in her own natural and instinctive love for the sensuous and beautiful, and in the grave dulness, that verges on repulsiveness, of that peculiar platform of Protestantism on which her aunt had taken her stand. Miss O'Fay's personal experience had been of such a nature that in the reaction of feeling and thorough change of life she had been carried to an extreme, whither Miss Hardy's very different experience could not yet willingly accompany her. The younger lady preferred that service which

appealed most directly to her heart and imagination; whereas, in the elder lady, the freshness of life's most thrilling feelings had long since been changed for grief and crushed by sentiments equally elevating but more gloomy in their tone. What would move the one almost to tears and stir the inmost depths of her soul, was scarcely sufficient to gain the attention of the other, or to ruffle the calm surface of her thoughts. In the one case, so that the words of the hymn were thoroughly evangelical in their tone, it but little mattered how rudely it was sung; in the other case it required Milton's pealing organ and full-voiced choir to sing "with sweetness" in their "service high and anthems clear" before she could be dissolved into ecstacies and bring all Heaven before her eyes.

Miss Hardy, as she walked back to Cliff Place from St. Paul's Evensong under the protection of Edgar Melladew, and conversed with him on various matters pertaining to the services and clergy of that church, could not say all that she might, could, or would have said, had she and Edgar been acquaintances of a longer standing; but she said quite enough for that gentleman to

perceive that her Church views were tending to the ultra "High," in contradistinction to those of her aunt, which were pronounceably ultra "Low;" and that they did not assimilate with his own views, which, however, went further in the direction of the niece than of the aunt. This was their first private walk; and that their conversation turned to Mattins rather than to Mutton's was attributable to their being on their way from St. Paul's rather than from the famed confectioner's. But their walk was soon at an end; for after they had left St. Paul's by its western approach, through a dimly-lighted narrow back-slum of a street, where the prevalence of fisher children and a pervading essence of fish-nets and tarring proclaimed it to be a locality for that piscatorial race for whose special benefit St. Paul's was said to have been erected, and for whose non-æsthetic tastes its services had no more attractions than for Miss O'Fay herself, they twisted and turned through some streets and little squares, by a route evidently well known to Miss Hardy, and were in Cliff Place before Edgar could have surmised that they had got half so far. Perhaps the little theological discussion into

which they had entered had exercised its peculiar charm in beguiling the way; for there is no point on which people can so perseveringly and pugnaciously contend as on the greater and lesser differences that beset them in their profession of one and the same faith. And it must be confessed that Miss Hardy and Mr. Melladew began their friendship by a very pretty little quarrel over St. Paul's and its mattins.

She gave him her hand, however, in a friendly way when they had reached the door of No. 52; and when he had said good-night, and had seen her safely admitted into her lodgings, he looked up to the lighted drawing-room of Mrs. Harpeyden's and then strolled down to the beach to console himself with a meditative cigar. Before the tea had been cleared away he came back to No. 105.

"Was there anything worth seeing at the theatre?" asked his sister.

"I have not been there," replied Edgar. "I went to the evening service at St. Paul's."

"Not been to the theatre, but to St. Paul's!" cried his mother. "Well! I have heard of a distinction without a difference; and from what

Miss O'Fay told me of the way in which the clergy were dressed and the services conducted, I should certainly imagine that——"

"Miss O'Fay is a tattling old maid," broke in Edgar, "and I pity those who have to live with her."

"And pity is akin to love," quoted his sister.

CHAPTER II.

THE END BATHING-MACHINE.

THANKS to some alterations that Mrs. Harpeyden had made in their beds, which produced the desired effect of making them somewhat softer and not quite so much like to mattresses filled with rough shingle, the Melladews passed a better night than their previous one at 105, Cliff Place. But at seven o'clock in the morning all sounds of their "quiet street" were again let loose. Again the school-bell jangled in the rear of the house, the great Newfoundland barked, and the school-boys shouted at their play and their games of fives. Again, from the street, went up the matutinal yell—that Brighton version of the fisherman's chorus from Massaniello—or yell oh! as it might, in this instance, be pronounced. Again the fish-fags, with a well-filled basket under

each arm, screamed "D'ye want any perrawns this mornin, m'am? any feesh to day, m'am? any soles or whiting?" Again the sailor-looking men with barrows yelled "Fish alive this morning! Soles, brill, whiting, fresh herring! Fine live flounders and cod-fish!" Again came the boys with their bundles of newspapers crying out *Times, Tellygraff, Standard, Mornin' Star, Brighton Gazette!* Again came the torture-grinders with their various unmusical instruments: again were heard the dreadful niggers wishing that they were in Dixie; again came the dust-cart, with the dustman clanging his bell; and again came the horse-drawn machine of "P. Meredith, working cutler, umbrellas and parasols neatly repaired," the proprietor thereof shouting through his nose "Any umberellers or parasoles to mend? any knives or scissors to grind?" laying such a loud stress on the first syllable of the word scissors that it seemed as though the word was the effect of a sudden explosion through his nose. Again came the men with bouquets of flowers, violets and ferns; and again the riding-master's horses clattered up the street on their way for the morning's exercise. In short, the

quiet street awoke to its full complement of distracting sounds.

The drawing-room windows were opened to the balcony, and Edgar, as he read his morning paper, made it his excuse to lounge there to gain a sight of their beautiful *vis-à-vis*. He not only gained the sight, but was also rewarded by a smile of recognition and a friendly inclination of Miss Hardy's head; and soon after this, he saw her leave the house in company with her aunt. He watched their two forms—the one looking so tall and stately in contrast with the diminutive figure of Miss O'Fay—and then went out for a stroll. Mrs. Melladew and Helen had already set forth for their marketings, in which, however, Helen did not take much share, as she left her mother in the town and went on towards the beach to have a bathe and make her first acquaintance with the Brighton sea.

Although the promenade and beach were not so crowded as they would be an hour or two hence when the town band would be playing and all the out-door amusements of the place would be there concentrated and in full force, yet the beach itself was thronged in that lower portion that

more immediately bordered upon the sea; and Helen could at once recognise the truth of what her brother had said as to the publicity of the bathing and to its being equally as private as having one's tub in the middle of Regent Street in the height of the season. But she had been accustomed to the bathing at Scarborough, and St. Leonards, and elsewhere; so that the Brighton crowd was not sufficient to deter her from her sea-dip, although she could certainly have wished it to be enjoyed in more privacy.

It was a famous morning for bathing, a nice brisk sea, with a warm sun that already gave promise of a very hot day. All the machines appeared to be engaged; and Helen wandered on from one to another, searching through Pollard's and Wisden's lots, but only to find everywhere the like assemblage of ladies in waiting, and to hear the stereotyped complaints that Miss So-and-so had had the machine for nearly an hour, and that it was a great shame to stay in the water so long, and too bad to keep other people waiting. At length she took up her position by the last machine in the row, where no one appeared to be in waiting, and where the bathing woman promised

that she should have the next turn. Helen would have preferred a machine in the midst of the row, where she would have been a little more screened from the observation of the curious; but, as she did not want to waste half her morning, she thought it best to content herself with this end machine, where she would get the first turn. Its occupant at that moment stepped forth and dipped herself in the sea, and proved to be Ella Hardy.

A "good morning, Miss Hardy," made her turn round to Helen; and, as she did so, and put aside her wet hair from her face, she looked as bright and rosy and beautiful as Aphrodite herself. If she had thus been seen by the brother instead of the sister, as her white skin gleamed from beneath her dark hair and blue bathing-dress, he might, perhaps, after his first panic of admiration had somewhat subsided, have apostrophised her in classical tropes and metaphors—*albo sic humero nitens, ut pura nocturno renidet, luna mari*—or done violence to the poetic Pegasus by the production of a sonnet to the sea-born.

"Oh! are you coming to bathe?" cried Ella Hardy, as she recognised the speaker.

"Yes! and I was waiting till this machine was disengaged."

"Oh! do come in now, if you don't mind;" said Ella Hardy, eagerly. "I think you will find just enough room in the machine; but I will come and let you in and put some of my things out of your way." And she pulled herself up to the steps by the aid of her rope; and, mounting up into the machine, unbolted its door, and gave admission to Helen Melladew.

There was certainly not very much room for two persons in its narrow boundary; especially as the discarded garments took up so much of the space as they hung from their pegs. But Helen had quickly slipped off her more voluminous articles of dress, and had helped to make the interior arrangements of their cabin a little more ship-shape; for as Ella Hardy was dripping wet she did not venture far within the precincts of the door, and again descended the steps into the sea, leaving Helen to put on her bathing-gown and join her.

Helen Melladew was soon ready; and as she stepped out she saw Ella Hardy at the extreme end of her rope, ducking, diving, and swilling

herself after the most approved fashion, revelling in the cool splash of the water. The tide was at its full, and was sweeping in in billows that, however tiny they might be in comparison with storm-billows, were yet sufficiently high to make the water pleasantly rough, and to form that agreeable series of undulations which bathers generally prefer to an unvarying calmness of surface. Ella Hardy was delighting in this undulating sea-scape with its little valleys and hills. She, at the end of her rope, and the young ladies in the next machines at the extremity of their ropes, were formed into a group of sea-nymphs, whose chief pastime was to bob up and down as they crouched in the trough of the wave and then allowed its crest to break over them in foam. A great deal of laughter and merriment accompanied this sport, which was evidently so very enjoyable that the complaints of the bathing-women as to the detention of their machines were scarcely to be wondered at; for the bathers had evidently no intention yet awhile of exchanging their cool quarters and loose robes for the hot beach and the dress of civilization.

Helen Melladew could swim, that is to say she was not a skilled professor in this accomplish-

ment, but she possessed a fair smattering of it. Her education in that art was sufficiently advanced to enable her to plunge with confidence from the steps of a bathing-machine into the depths of an advancing wave, and there to float and to swim about for a brief distance. But at present she was partially dependent upon the security of a rope, and also upon the buoyancy of the salt water; and in a river or lake she would probably have sunk at the second stroke. But on the present occasion the state of the sea gave her an opportunity to display her skill to the other young lady bathers, and as even modest and unassuming girls are not altogether averse to sometimes do this in a quiet way, Helen took up her position on the steps of the machine and waited for the proper moment when the seventh and highest wave should wash up to her very feet.

It came, and as it did so Helen took her plunge; and a very respectable leap it was, even if it was not quite so much of a sensational header as that taken by the hero in the "Colleen Bawn." But it was a plunge that sufficed to carry her under the wave, out of which she paddled herself, somewhat breathless, but withal triumphant; and with

the aid of her robe began to float out to sea towards Ella Hardy, who had watched the leap, and had exclaimed in delighted amazement, "Why, you can swim! Oh, how nice! I wish you would teach me; I so want to learn."

Now it so happened that Helen Melladew's leap was observed by other eyes than those of Ella Hardy and the neighbouring young lady bathers. Not very far from the end bathing-machine two young gentlemen were lying on the beach, ostensibly engaged in sending into the sea a beautiful black retriever, and inducing it to bring out from thence their walking-sticks, or anything else that was flung to him. The gentlemen had somewhat tired of this sport, and although the dog's capacity for pastime was by no means exhausted, yet as no more sticks were thrown into the water for his amusement, he had been compelled to bring his game to a close and to lie down on the beach beside his masters, varying the monotony of his idleness by trundling himself dry over any passing old lady, or making a dash after any hoop or toy-boat that came within the sphere of temptation, attacks in which he was invariably routed by the nursemaids. Stretched at full length upon the

beach, with their dog beside them, these two gentlemen had not been observed by the two young ladies who jointly occupied the end bathing-machine; a circumstance not to be wondered at, as they were chiefly concealed from view by the continual passing to and fro of the ladies and children and nursemaids who came down to the very edge of the waves, there to play or watch the bathers. But when the retriever heard the splash that Helen Melladew made as she leaped from the steps of her machine and plunged into the advancing wave, he could no longer endure the monotony of his land life. Evidently conceiving in his intelligent mind that there was a human creature in distress, whom it was his bounden duty to rescue from a watery grave, he dashed from his masters' side, and in defiance of their calls and whistles, jumped into the sea and swam off towards Helen Melladew's floating figure.

"Oh, there is a dog coming to you!" cried out Ella Hardy. Her warning came too late. In another moment the faithful beast had swum to Helen's side, and seizing her bathing-gown firmly in his teeth, began to tug at it lustily, with the evident intention of dragging its wearer to the

land and laying her at his masters' feet. Helen clung to her rope and struggled to free herself from the dog's grasp; but he was not to be shaken off, and held her so firmly and tugged at her so powerfully that, in spite of herself, Helen felt herself being dragged away from the protection of her machine in the direction of the gentlemen, who had leaped to their legs and were doing their best to call off their dog.

A new disaster now arose, for in the mutual strife of Helen Melladew and the retriever to proceed different ways, her blue bathing-dress gave way in the dog's teeth; and although he at once seized upon a fresh part of the garment and made good his grip upon it, yet that only made matters worse. Helen's innate modesty now began to receive a severe trial, for she was aware that her tattered dress was already subjecting her to some amount of undue exposure; and if the dog succeeded in his evident object of dragging her to the shore and laying her at his masters' feet; and if her gown, as seemed probable, should receive further rents in the struggle, in what state would she finally be exposed to the throng on the beach? As this idea, with all its attendant circumstances,

passed through her mind, it suggested a problem the solution of which she altogether shrank from working out, for it formed a very painful experience, which happily was quite a novelty to her.

Ella Hardy had at once followed up her note of warning as to the dog's approach by making her way towards her friend in order to give her all the assistance that lay in her power. But several yards of water parted them; and, as Miss Hardy was no swimmer, her progress over the rough shingle was very slow, too slow, as it seemed, to render any available aid to arrest the gradually receding form of her friend. It was doubtful to say how the matter would have ended, and to what plight Helen Melladew would have been reduced, had it not been for the woman who was in attendance on her bathing-machine. She had no sooner heard the commotion and seen its cause, than, stick in hand, she ran into the water, and was speedily at Helen's side, stoutly belabouring the dog and making him loose his hold of the bathing-gown. This she soon effected, and the retriever at once saw and acknowledged the error of his ways by listening to his masters'

commands, and rejoining the two young gentlemen upon the beach, where he received a sound flogging for his error of judgment.

In the meantime, under cover of the bathing-woman, Helen had got safely back to her machine without her ragged drapery unduly exposing her to curious eyes. The woman was as loud in her protestations that such a thing had never happened in all her experience as she was in denouncing the two gentlemen for sending their great brute of a dog into the water to attack a poor defenceless young lady; and, leaving Helen Melladew under the charge of Ella Hardy, she went out to the gentlemen, who were waiting for her in order to tender their apologies. Upon them she fell, metaphorically, tooth and nail, declaring that their shameful conduct would be the ruin of herself in particular, and the Brighton bathing in general, with much more that was equally wide of the mark in point of argument, but was powerful in its delivery and forcible in its application. The offering of a couple of half-crowns to purchase a new bathing-gown to replace the damaged article somewhat calmed her; and she then permitted herself to listen to the ex-

planation of the gentlemen, and their promise that they would be more careful with their dog for the future, and that when they tried his powers of swimming and fetching and carrying, they would practise him at a greater distance from the ladies' bathing-machines. She also promised to convey to the young lady their very sincere apologies for the disagreeables she had suffered through their carelessness in bringing their retriever to that particular spot.

Her first fright over, Helen laughed at the affair and treated it as a joke; though, as she held up the fragments of her torn bathing-dress, and gave Ella Hardy more than a glimpse of the fair body that it only partially concealed, she said, "This is not quite the costume that one would select for a first appearance on Brighton beach."

"Indeed it is not," laughed Miss Hardy, who was also in her bathing attire. "But, if you had been given to fainting, you had a good opportunity for it. Did his teeth touch you?"

"No, I think not," replied Helen, as she examined herself through the rents of the bathing-gown. "I do not see a scratch. And really,

although he behaved so rudely, yet he quite won my heart, for he looked so beautifully intelligent, as though he was quite determined that he would save me from drowning. I am afraid they are beating him," she added, as a subdued howl reached the recesses of their dressing-room. "I am very sorry he should be punished on my account, for he ought to be rewarded, and made a companion doggie to Landseer's 'Distinguished Member of the Humane Society.' He is quite handsome enough to have his portrait taken. But I hope that the two gentlemen who were with him did not see my face sufficiently to enable them to recognize me if we should meet."

"And you will have the pleasure of meeting them before long," laughed Ella Hardy, who had slipped out of her bathing-gown, and was industriously at work rubbing herself dry with her own Turkish towels, and, with her glossy black hair floating all around her stately form, looking more than ever like the Venus Aphrodite, with the exception that the goddess was independent of Turkish towels, and could do as did the thrifty Scotchman, who, when he bathed, boasted that he used the sun for a hand-towel.

"Then did you know them?" asked Helen, as she interrupted herself for a moment in the same glow-producing operation.

"Yes," replied Ella Hardy; "they were Kitty Galloway's brothers. But I think they did not see me so as to know me, for I pulled my hair about my face as soon as I recognized them. And I knew their dog very well, for he is quite a pet! and I was very nearly calling him by his name, only I feared that by so doing I should disclose myself."

"How very disagreeable!" said Helen.

And they kept silence for a time, busied with their efforts to get dry. Then, as a sense of the ridiculousness of the past scene crept over them, they began to laugh heartily, and there was much merriment between the two young ladies as they continued their toilette, for which the bathing-machine afforded them a very limited space. If anything had been needed to cement their friendship, this little adventure had effected it.

"I will peep and see if the coast is clear," said Ella Hardy, as she looked cautiously through the little shuttered window, and then out at the

door; but no Galloways, male or female, were in sight. So they hastily made their descent from the machine, the bathing-woman pursuing them with apologies, and begging that the unfortunate accident, of which she assured them she had never known the like, might not cause her to lose their patronage; for she begged them to believe that they were two young ladies as were that sweet and haffable that it was a pleasure to wait upon them.

"We shall see you after luncheon, Ella," said Helen Melladew, as they parted in Cliff Place. "I must call you Ella, as I did in the dear old school-days. And let me be Helen to you—or Nellie, if you prefer it?"

"You shall be the very dearest of Nellies," said Ella, heartily, with a warm pressure of the hand, in the absence of a kiss and embrace, which could not very well be administered on the brick pavement of a Brighton street.

So their compact of renewed friendship was sealed; and the black retriever of the Messieurs Galloway had no need to feel ashamed of his morning's work, although he had taught Helen Melladew a lesson that she never forgot, which

was — when you are at a fashionable watering-place, and are compelled to bathe in presence of a crowded beach, avoid, if possible, the end bathing-machine.

CHAPTER III.

A DRIVE AND A LETTER

WHEN Miss Kitty Galloway, according to their agreement, came to luncheon with the Melladews, she said to Helen—

"I am afraid that my dreadful brothers, Fred and Frank, have got into a scrape this morning."

"Indeed! I hope not," replied Helen, who of course was prepared to hear what followed.

"But I fear that they have, though," said Miss Kitty. "They are the most terribly thoughtless boys, and they *will* go and swim their dog near to the bathing-machines; and this morning, it seems, that he pounced upon some unfortunate young lady, and I daresay half frightened her out of her wits, although they are rude enough to call it 'a jolly lark!' Papa is excessively angry about it, and insists upon their making an apology to the young lady; but it seems that

they were too scared to ask who it was, and, to use their own words, declared that they should not 'know her from Adam!' So I suppose that there is an end of the matter, though they are in great disgrace about it.'

Helen Melladew preferred to keep her own council, and not to divulge the secret to Kitty Galloway, whose open-hearted gushing nature might possibly have led her, had the matter been confided to her to keep as a strict secret, to break the seal of confession, and thus to bring her two brothers into further disgrace, and into an uncomfortable acquaintance with Miss Melladew. So Helen did not disclose her morning's adventure to her friend, but merely said that she had had her first bathe, and had very much enjoyed it; and when Ella Hardy came in, after luncheon, with Miss O'Fay, she at once whispered to her the state of affairs, and her wish that the morning's adventure should remain undivulged.

As they were six in number to take a drive, it was very evident that they must have more than one fly. The question was, how were they to divide themselves. Edgar tried his best tactics; but it was as difficult to contrive to get himself

and Miss Hardy into the same car with a proper *chaperone* without separating the two elderly ladies, as it was to solve the knotty problem of the fox and geese and ferry-boat. So he was obliged to bow to his fate, and they set off along the King's Road towards Kemp Town, in two flies, the three young ladies in the first, and he and the two elder ones in the second.

Mrs. Melladew, on the previous day, had noticed the brilliant equipages, and had felt a pang of county pride that they also had not brought to Brighton their own carriage and horses and servants, though in the long run it might be doubted if, when the bills came to be paid, she would have felt half so satisfied as she was when driving about in a hack fly. But before they set out for their drive, she could not resist the opportunity of making some sort of apology and explanation to Miss O'Fay, when they were having a little private talk that could not be overheard by the younger people.

"The expense, of course, would chiefly fall upon my son," she said; "and I am very anxious that he should nurse his property as much as possible, especially as he has been at a con-

siderable outlay on the improvement of the estate, and that he should not launch out more than is needful until his marriage."

"Is he going to be married soon?" asked Miss O'Fay, but quite casually, and with no more personal interest than womankind usually feel in the matter of marriage.

"Not yet, I think," replied Mrs. Melladew. "But I am beginning to feel rather anxious now that he should settle. Left as he is with all the responsibilities of a county gentleman, he is not in his proper station until he has a wife to superintend his establishment. Miss Hawley, the charming daughter of a baronet whose place is very near to us, would be an eligible connection, and a very proper match in every respect."

"Now, mother, the flies are at the door," called Edgar, as he stepped in from the balcony and abruptly terminated the conversation.

But Miss O'Fay told her niece, that same evening, that Mr. Melladew was engaged to be married to a Miss Hawley, a baronet's daughter, and that the marriage would take place before long; and as the little lady had no motive for over-stating the case to Miss Hardy, it may rea-

sonably be supposed that, in the clatter of their quiet street, she did not precisely catch the import of Mrs. Melladew's words.

But the clatter was increased a hundred-fold when they had got to the King's Road, and were immersed in the noise and confusion of the moving throng. It was, indeed, a distracting sight; though much more so to Mrs. Melladew, who had so recently exchanged for it the calm quiet of the country, than it was for Miss O'Fay, whose three weeks in Brighton had acclimatized her to its sights and sounds. The splendour of the afternoon had brought out more than the usual number of gay Brighton butterflies, whose brilliant plumage gave colour and sparkle to the life and bustle of the scene. The three-mile line of white houses fronted a sea whose calm expanse was flecked and spotted with sails and boats, and swept by long shades of bright greens and purples. Between the sea and the houses, along the wide road that was carried along the low western cliffs and the higher eastern cliff, rolled a human tide that ebbed and flowed between Adelaide Crescent and Kemp Town with a regularity and ceaseless pertinacity that resembled

the swell and roll of that sea whose murmuring music and soothing plash were well-nigh drowned in the deeper diapason of the thundering carriages and clattering horses. From half-past two to half-past five, the other parts of the town were comparatively deserted for a ride and drive along the cliffs.

Family coaches, with hammer-cloths, wigged coachmen and powdered footmen; chariots, broughams, waggonettes, mail-phaetons, basket-carriages, pony phaetons, with here and there a dog-cart, and perhaps a solitary four-in-hand drag, mixed up with a host of flies, drove along in lines that were often four abreast, and through which horsemen and horse-women in twos and threes and riding-master clusters, pushed their way, filtering themselves through the mob of vehicles in the best way they could, and cantering away to the Downs or the racecourse, or returning to their starting-point without having shown themselves elsewhere than in the King's Road and the Marine Parade. On the gravel footway next to the beach crawled a slow stream of bath-chairs with their invalid and aged burthens—pretty goat-carriages with their prettier

merry freight of childhood (one of the prettiest of the many pretty sights of Brighton), nurses with babies gorgeous in the latest novelties in robes, capes, and hats—and a shoal of pedestrians of every age, kind, and condition. On the brick pavement in front of the houses was another dense throng of pedestrians, lounging from shop-window to shop-window, the gaiety and glitter and fashion of whose multitudinous contents was no bad reflex or emblem of the butterfly throng to catch whom they were spread as enticing nets. "No shops," says Thackeray, "so beautiful to look at as the Brighton gimcrack shops, and the fruit shops, and the market." And, undoubtedly, the delight of looking into the shop-windows is one of the never-tiring pleasures of the place. And as to the afternoon drive along the cliffs, is it not, with regard to Brighton, as Tennyson said—

> "That not in any northern town
> With statelier progress to and fro
> The double tides of chariots flow"?

And so our friends from Cliff Place drove up and down from Adelaide Crescent to Kemp Town, and from Kemp Town to Adelaide Crescent, and

then back again from Adelaide Crescent to Kemp Town; and Edgar pointed out to his mother the illustrious Mutton's, and the equally illustrious Brill's, as two of the chief institutions of Brighton,—and Child's shop of delights for children of all ages, and Silvani's stores of precious bronzes,—and Bacon's Ship Hotel, which, he said, was formerly kept by Hogsflesh—and the Steyne Gardens, where the mother of the Rev. Charles Honeyman lived—and the way to Dorset Gardens, where Miss Emma Haines turned up her nose at Mr. Gilbert Gurney—and the plentifulness of bow-windows, and the scarcity of green, save on the painted balconies and verandahs—and the universality of the hardy tamarisk in all the gardens and squares. And so, from Adelaide to Arundel Terrace they drove backwards and forwards; and when two hours had been consumed in this pastime, and the ladies had became somewhat tired of passing the same people over and over again, and pronouncing the same opinions on the same bonnets and hats, they called a halt, paid ten shillings for their afternoon's diversion, and returned home with an appetite for dinner.

"I am not so sure," said Mrs. Melladew, as she sat over that meal, in the company of her son and daughter, "that it would not have been cheaper, after all, to have brought the carriage and horses and servants." The good lady, it seemed, had been pondering not only on the expense that would be incurred by the continual hire of flies—more especially when they drove to any distance—but still more so, by the pangs that her pride had been undergoing during the two hours' drive on the Parade at seeing other persons in their well-appointed carriages, while she herself drove out in a hack-fly.

Edgar endeavoured to reconcile her to the presumed loss of dignity incurred by this proceeding, by reminding her that in the course of their drive he had pointed out to her one of the Foreign Ambassadors also riding in a hack fly; but Mrs. Melladew met this observation by saying that this was altogether a different thing, the gentleman in question being a foreigner, and being unaccompanied by ladies. Upon which Edgar, who had formerly kept a horse and dog-cart at Brighton, and knew to his cost what were the expenses of livery-stables, made out for his

mother such a formidable statement of what would be the expense of a carriage and pair and two servants, and the good entertainment for man and beast, in that town of great charges, that the good lady was partly reconciled to her fate; and when she afterwards felt any pang of pride at driving about in a hack fly among the gay equipages, comforted herself with the maternal reflection that she was nursing her son's property.

"And what did you think of Miss Hardy, Nelly?" said Mr. Edgar, with an ill-concealed air of indifference.

"Oh! she is delicious!" answered his sister. "Having been together nearly all the day, with our bathing and drive, I have been able to see so much of her. She is more sober-minded than Kitty Galloway; and although Kitty is, perhaps, the best fun, I should sooner choose Ella Hardy for a real friend. How odd it is that they should both turn up."

"Miss Hardy," said Mrs. Melladew, "appears to have very pronounced opinions on religious matters."

"So has her aunt," said Edgar.

"Yes," replied his mother; "but Miss Hardy's

are of a very dangerous tendency. I hope, my dear Helen, that you will not suffer yourself to be led astray in these matters."

"Mattins?" asked Edgar, pretending partial deafness.

"I said matters," rejoined Mrs. Melladew; "but Mattins will do; for they were among the Puseyite practices that I had in my mind. Miss Hardy's aunt is much distressed about her, and is acting very judiciously in—"

"Cries of question as to the judiciousness!" interrupted Edgar.

"She has been kind enough to say," continued his mother, "that she will procure us invitations to a Bible tea at her friend Mrs. Grimsby Grout's on Tuesday next, and she has already communicated with Mrs. Grout on the subject. I should wish you to accompany me there, Helen."

"Will tail-coats be admitted?" asked Edgar, who fancied that he would not mind going if Miss Hardy were to be of the party.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Melladew gravely, as though it was much too solemn a matter for joking; "but I dare say that it would benefit you

to go. I shall hear more about it to-morrow, when I promised to accompany Miss O'Fay to the Pavilion. She is very fond of music; and the military band plays at the Pavilion on Wednesdays and Saturdays."

"I had thought to have taken you to the Pavilion on Tuesday evening," said Edgar quietly to his sister, "to hear Mr. and Mrs. George Case's entertainment; but I suppose you will be obliged to go to this very different entertainment at Mrs. Grimsby Grout's."

"Yes," replied Helen; "mamma has quite made up her mind on that point. And Miss O'Fay and Ella Hardy will be there. I watched you, sir, this afternoon, every time that our carriages passed each other in making the turns, and you never took your eyes off Ella Hardy. I suppose you thought her more attractive than Kitty Galloway."

"I saw no one else who could touch her in looks," said Edgar; "and I stand to my first impression, that she is the Beauty of Brighton. How oppressive the evening is! we shall surely have tempest. I shall go and take a stroll on the beach. Will you come?"

"I think I had better stay with mamma," said Helen. "I don't like to leave her quite alone, and she is fidgety about me. still, notwithstanding that I can say 'Nine' as well as Dr. Fleam himself."

So Edgar went out alone. Soon after he was gone the evening post came in and brought Mrs. Melladew a letter, the direction of which was in the handwriting of the curate of Melladew. "Whatever can Mr. Ansley want," she said, "in writing to me already? I thought that I had settled everything about the Clothing Club before we left home. Perhaps Tomkins's wife is confined, and the linen can't be spared from Mrs. Green. But if so, I should have thought that he might have arranged that with the housekeeper."

"Had you not better read the letter, mamma?" suggested Helen, who was all anxiety to know the precise nature of its contents.

"Well, perhaps I had," said her mother, as though it were a valuable suggestion which might not otherwise have occurred to her mind. "But I don't think that I can read it by this light; the gas seems to hurt my eyes, and Mr. Ansley writes such a scrawl that I can scarcely decipher

it. You had better open the letter, Helen, and see what it is all about."

This was soon done, for there was not much to read; but what there was, was highly satisfactory to Helen. His aunt, he stated, had suddenly made up her mind to go to Brighton, and both she and his sister would, by the time that letter reached Mrs. Melladew, be at the lodgings they had taken in Rock Gardens, Marine Parade; and, all well, would do themselves the pleasure of calling upon Mrs. Melladew on the following afternoon; to speak of which, he said, was one of his reasons for writing. His other reason was to say that as Mr. Pordage was much better, and he had been able to arrange to get away for a few days, including a Sunday, he proposed to join his aunt and sister at Brighton on the following Wednesday evening; and as this would be the second of September, he could take charge for Mrs. Melladew of any hamper or any game that her son might wish the gamekeeper to kill on the first, if he did not himself intend to keep the festival of St. Partridge at Melladew. He included Miss Melladew in his kind regards, and that was the only mention that was made of her.

"I shall be glad to make the acquaintance of Mr. Ansley's relatives," said Mrs. Melladew, "though I scarcely see the necessity that there was for them to call upon us so soon. And it will interfere with our engagement at the Pavilion, unless, indeed, we take the fly round by Rock Gardens, and call upon them first, and then go to the Pavilion. Yes; I think that will be the better plan, and it will look friendly to Mr. Ansley, who is a very deserving young man, although the sound of his name unfortunately deceives people into fancying that he is related to the Mountnorris Annesleys. You had better take possession of the note, Helen, and see that your brother replies to it concerning the game. He talked of not going for any shooting till the end of next week, and I should be glad of some of the Melladew partridges, for they are sure to ask a great price for a brace in Brighton. Mr. Ansley is certainly very thoughtful to have proposed bringing them. I think I will write to the housekeeper, and have a large hamper made up. We shall be glad of poultry, and they can come up with the gardener's stock of fresh fruit and vegetables. It will be safer to have every-

thing packed in a hamper than to bring the partridges loose. It is really very kind and thoughtful of Mr. Ansley to have proposed this." So that by the end of her speech Mrs. Melladew had worked herself up to a state of admiration for their curate's good qualities.

As for Helen, she kept her thoughts to herself, and laid them up like sweet rose-leaves to be treasured in secret.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS PETTIFER'S CRINOLINE.

A SHARP ring at the door-bell of No. 105, Cliff Place, was shortly followed by the entrance into the drawing-room of Mrs. Harpeyden's servant. She laid a bulky parcel upon the side-table and then went out.

Mrs. Melladew went to inspect it. "A new crinoline!" she cried, as she opened the parcel. "Why, when did you order this, Helen?"

"It is not mine; it must be some mistake," replied Helen.

"Oh, I see! here is the direction," said Mrs. Melladew, as she read it. "'Miss Pettifer, No. 105, Cliff Place.' So it is for Pettifer. I suppose she took advantage of her walk this afternoon to make herself smart. Really the fashion is quite preposterous;" and Mrs. Melladew spread out her own voluminous skirts. "I

am sure that Pettifer wears quite enough petticoats already. She knocked down the water-jug in my room this morning with her hoops, but happily without breaking the jug. She will be up with the tea-things directly, and then she can take her parcel."

"It is quite a good crinoline," said Helen, as she examined it.

"It cannot have cost less than ten or twelve shillings," said her mother; "and if she is to wear such things, I am sure that a half-crown one would be quite sufficient. I must give her a word of caution about spending her money so foolishly."

So when the maid appeared with the tea-things, her mistress gave her the threatened advice. Pettifer was greatly concerned at her new purchase having been brought up to the drawing-room instead of being taken down to her in the kitchen, and in her own mind vowed condign punishment on the unfortunate Abigail who had perpetrated the blunder.

"It come about this way, ma'am," explained Pettifer, as she set out the tea-things. "When I was getting out of the railway carriage at this

very Brighton station, being unaccustomed to travel and naterally flustered at getting myself out of the narrow doorway and down the awkward steps of the carriage on to the platform, without exposing of myself more than was proper; and the marquis's gentleman—which was the Marquis of Moulting's gentleman and the facksy-mile of the marquis himself, mustashers excepted, and had been in the same carriage with me, and made himself pertickler pleasant, especially in the matter of walnuts, he was giving me his 'and in the perlitest way to 'elp me down the steps, and I was trying as careful as possible to keep my clothes to theirselves, when my crinoline 'ooked 'isself on a 'inge, and as I stept down at that instant, there I might have 'ung, goodness knows, till now, if the marquis's gentleman hadn't disengaged me in the most engaging way."

"That was very polite of him," said Helen, as Pettifer paused for a moment in her voluble discourse to take breath.

"It were indeed, miss," said the Melladew maid, very heartily; "but he was ekally perlite to me all the way from London, both in and out of the tunnels; and for all the marchioness's maid

looked so 'aughty and kep herself to herself in a libary book, yet he peeled walnuts for me all the same. Well, ma'am, there I was 'ooked on to the 'inge, and 'anging to it. Most providentially, as I may say, I had on my best Balmorals, and a pair of as nice white stockings as any marquis's gentleman might see at their own establishment; so that I were quite fit to be exposed in a permiscous way, although not seeking for it, and it being a haccident which mortal power could not have pervented. But the marchioness's maid, she chose to take it quite the other way, and turning up her nose—which, goodness knows, it were quite turned up enough already—she said, quite sharp like, 'If the young woman'—'young woman' was the percise epitaph she used, I can assure you, ma'am, although I had told her my name and the genteel family in which I were living—'if the young woman,' said the marchioness's maid, 'had wished to make a display of herself, I wonder at her putting herself in such a hunfashionable jewpon,' which she must have signified my crinoline, because she said it might be stiffening enough for the country, but would never do for a town life. So the words that

rankled in my mind that although I only said to her 'Indeed!' and 'Oh, I dessay!' yet my crinoline being badly tore and the 'oops broken, I thought it best to get a new one altogether; and to show the marchioness's maid, if I should meet her again, which it is but reasonable to expect, though like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay, that though we does come from the country, yet we are not altogether to be took for heathens, and that I know what is becoming to my situation, likewise to a town life."

Mrs. Melladew told her to disregard what other people said of her, and to be careful not to dress above her station; and not to be tempted to spend her money foolishly by the enticements of the shops. All which advice Pettifer promised to obey.

"Why, here's the cat come in again!" said Helen, as the large black cat, Smoke, bounded into the room like an acrobat into a circus, and began rubbing himself round Pettifer's gown.

"Yes, miss," said Pettifer, "he seems to have taken quite a fancy to me, and follows me about everywhere, upstairs and down."

"Which, you told me, was a sign that the

person so followed possessed an amiable temper, so you ought to make much of his attentions. But what is Smoke after now? there cannot be mice in the balcony!' While Helen was speaking, the black cat had gone to the window, and was pushing his way behind the venetian blinds, as though he were looking through the glass into the balcony.

"He's looking for storms, miss," replied Pettifer. "Mrs. Harpeyden was telling me of his tricks, and she said they always knew when tempestous weather was about from Smoke getting behind the blinds to look for its coming. Here, Smoke, Smoke!" and she left the room with her crinoline parcel in her hand and the black cat trotting at her heels.

Whether or no Smoke was really gifted with the power of foretelling storms, or whether it was an empty claim for him on Mrs. Harpeyden's part, and not a subject that could in any trustworthy manner be transferred to a volume of anecdotes of animal sagacity; or whether, on this particular night, he made a happy hit, like Mr. Murphy with his coldest day, cannot now be determined, but nevertheless it was undoubtedly the case that,

although at half-past eight o'clock, when Smoke was presumed to be looking for storms, the sky was cloudless and the air calm, yet that shortly after nine o'clock a black pile of thunder-charged clouds surged up from the south-east, followed by a hurricane of wind and a terrific storm. The lightning flashed incessantly, and the thunder was so continuous that before the echo of one peal had died away its reverberations were lost in the louder clap that succeeded it. The rain poured down in torrents, making many of the steep streets like so many watercourses; and the sharp inclines on either side of the north valley seemed like so many channels for the cataract streams that swept down upon the unfortunate low-lying houses, whose cellars and basements were soon flooded to the depth of several feet. Great hailstones also fell with the rain, more especially in the northern portions of the town, and in many places were drifted into heaps of more than a foot deep. The storm was as brief as it was sudden; but during the half hour that it lasted, it spread havoc far and wide, and was the most remarkable storm that had occurred in Brighton for very many years.

Edgar came in hastily just at its commencement, and being told of Smoke's prognostications, Mrs. Harpeyden's black cat began to assume a weird-like and witch-attendant character.

"By the way, here is a letter for you to read from Mr. Ansley," said Helen to her brother, as she handed him the curate's note. "He talks of coming to Brighton next Wednesday, and his aunt and sister were to arrive to-night at Rock Gardens. It is to be hoped that they were safely housed before this storm came."

Edgar read the note and said that he was glad Ansley had suggested about the first of September, and that he would write to his gamekeeper to kill a certain amount of game and to preserve the rest of the shooting till he came to Melladew. "Oh! you keep the letter, do you, Nellie?" he said, as his sister took it from him as he was giving it to his mother. And when he was kissing her as he bade her good night, he took the opportunity to whisper something in her ear, to which she only replied, "What nonsense!" But from the pleasure that beamed in her eyes and sunned over her blushing face, the nonsense seemed to be very agreeable nonsense indeed.

The male novelist has an advantage over ordinary gentlemen, in that he is able, without any false delicacy or fear of ulterior proceedings, to transport himself to the bedchamber of any of his female characters. It is not the desire of the present author to convey himself and his readers either to the bedroom of Miss Melladew or to that of Miss Hardy, and, in language borrowed from the objectionable novels of Paul de Kock, Feydeau, A. Vermorel, Alphonse Karr, Dumas *fils*, Mdlle. Camache, and the writers in the four-sous series, describe their preparations for bed, or scrutinise them as they lie asleep and toss restless to and fro murmuring the beloved name. Truth to tell, the two young ladies in question, being blessed with good health and good digestion, ordinarily slept too soundly to be enabled, when they awoke in the morning, to tell all their dreams, like Dr. Watts's sluggard; but rather, like him, they arose to think of eating and drinking, for as they awoke from sound, dreamless sleep, refreshed and invigorated by "tired Nature's sweet restorer," they were always ready for their breakfast, and could enjoy it with a good appetite. If they had passed a restless toss-about night, it would probably have

been the result of pebble-filled mattresses, and not of thoughts of the beloved one.'

And this is said at the risk of robbing the two heroines of any glamour of poetry or romance that might otherwise pervade them. But surely, my dear Cœlebs, when you set out in search of a wife you want one who will be a healthy mother to your children, and not a crumpled rose-leaf of a creature, fed on moonbeams and etherialized into nambipambiness. In the expressive language of the shop, you want a stout, serviceable article that will wash and wear, and not a fragile, delicate bit of goods that will scarcely preserve its qualities for a brief honeymoon season. And so not here shall it be attempted to tell you of dyspeptic dreams, which these two healthy young ladies never had—for Helen Melladew was in full health, notwithstanding her mother's fears and the visit to Dr. Fleam—nor shall there here be described any of those bedroom "interiors" that had much better be left to the French novelists and the other purveyors for the indelicacies of the season. Yet, although we refrain from intruding on the privacy of the bedrooms of our two heroines, it becomes necessary for the due development of

a certain incident that we should ascend to the attics of Mrs. Harpeyden's house and peep into the chamber where Miss Pettifer is sleeping, though it is rather to her new crinoline than to herself that our attention will be particularly directed.

On retiring to her room for the night, Pettifer had contemplated, with much complacent satisfaction, the swelling form of her new crinoline. She had then tried it on, and imagined it to be quite becoming to her; but, from the smallness of her room and looking-glass, she could not get a good view of herself, although she had mounted upon the bed and placed the glass in the best position for reflecting her figure.

"If I had only the long swing-glass in the missis's room," thought Pettifer, as she twisted and twirled before the little mirror, "I could see myself from top to toe." But, as it was, she had to content herself with visions of parcelled fragments of the glorious whole.

When she finally retired to rest, she hung the crinoline from a handle of the chest of drawers, so that its inflated bell-like form dangled from thence to the ground, on which it rested, covering

a dress and dark shawl that had been laid there when she emptied her box. She went to sleep looking at it; for the weather had quite cleared after the late violent storm, and, as it was a moonlight night, she could discern the various objects in the little room with tolerable distinctness. At length she went to sleep—to sleep, and also to dream; for it so happened that she had treated herself to a pint of shrimps for her supper, and the unwonted delicacy caused her to sleep lightly and dream confusedly.

She fancied herself in the avenue at Melladew, sweeping along in all the glories of the new crinoline, and watching the ships and bathing-machines, which, curiously enough, had thrust out the well-remembered features of the park. By her side was the marquis's gentleman, who was whispering to her such honeyed words as that she looked a haingel, and would take the shine out of many a born lady. At which interesting juncture the marchioness's maid came behind her and spitefully trod upon her new crinoline, which gave such a swishing rent that Miss Pettifer awoke, and awoke, too, to the very un-

comfortable impression that some one was in her room.

But how could this be, when she had locked her door and had carefully looked under the bed? Yet certainly there was a noise; the noise, probably, by which she had been aroused from her dream. Partially raising herself in bed, she looked towards that crinoline which had been so lately in her thoughts. It was from that direction that the sound proceeded; and no wonder, for the crinoline was swaying violently to and fro, as though its movements had been guided by a wearer. The violent hurricane that had raged that same night had subsided more than an hour before, the wind had sunk, the night was calm, and both the door and window of her room were closed. There was no breeze that could so affect her crinoline as to cause its oscillations.

Pettifer rubbed her eyes. Could she be dreaming? No; the moonlight was sufficient to reveal to her the fact that her new crinoline, as it hung loosely from the handle of the chest of drawers, was violently agitated by some unseen cause, while noises of a mysterious and unearthly cha-

racter proceeded from its interior. Miss Pettifer felt, as she afterwards expressed it when describing her sensations, "as though her heart were up in her mouth," which was a rude but efficient way of mentioning the rising of the *globus hystericus* in her throat, which gave her the idea that she was being choked, and prevented her either from speaking or screaming.

In mute horror and amazement she watched the remarkable contortions and gyrations of her newly acquired garment, whose tossings to and fro at length assumed such a pitch of inebriety that the strings that had gathered its upper portion into its narrowest dimensions gave way from their loose hold upon the handle of the chest of drawers, and the bell-like form fell in like a partially collapsed balloon. This, however, did not put a stop to the mysterious noises and movements. They ceased but for a moment, and then began in a new form; for the crinoline, somewhat shrunken in its height now that it was no longer suspended by its strings, began to make a slow movement across the room—not a steady, straightforward progress, but whirling, shaking, and spinning. Its eccentric march was directed in the

first instance towards the bed, and when it had reached the foot its motions were so peculiar that Miss Pettifer received a fresh accession of alarm, imagining that, in another instant, it would spring on to the bedclothes. She gathered herself together, all of a heap, awaiting the result with a fever of anxiety that parched her throat far too much to enable her to utter a cry. She believed in ghosts. Was this a ghost that had clothed itself in her new crinoline in order to read her a lesson on her vanity? If so, she was sufficiently punished for any feminine failings of which she may have been guilty in connection with that garment.

CHAPTER V.

THE GHOST OF CLIFF PLACE.

ETTIFER lay huddled and trembling on her bed, watching the extraordinary movements of her new crinoline, and waiting with dread expectancy for its ghost-possessed form to spring upon her. If drowning men can, in a supreme moment, live through the memories and scenes of many past years, Mrs. Melladew's maid, in those few terrible minutes, experienced the full accumulations of bitterness that can arise from mortified vanity. She would never again, she resolved, buy a fashionable crinoline in Brighton, whatever the marquis's gentleman might think of her or the marchioness's maid say of her. If her purchase was to haunt her in this dreadful way, she would be happier without it. Even now it seemed preparing to spring upon the bed and fly at her.

The thing, however, whatever it may have been, ghost or no ghost, changed its purpose, and continued its wild gyrations from the bed to the fireplace, and from thence to the dressing-table beneath the window. Now or never was the opportunity for Pettifer to make her escape. Gathering together her shattered and scattered energies, she sprang from the bed, hastily unlocked the door, and in another moment was on the landing, thumping against the opposite door, and, with her newly found voice calling upon Mrs. Harpeyden's servant to let her in. The door was locked, and the few moments seemed to be ages before the servant could be aroused from her first heavy sleep, and understood matters sufficiently to be made aware that some one was knocking for admission into her bedroom. All this time Pettifer, trembling in her night-dress, heard the movements of her mysterious visitant, and was under the apprehension that it would follow her out upon the narrow landing, and there attack her before she could gain a harbour of refuge.

At last, after agonising moments of suspense, she heard the servant tumble out of bed and walk heavily across the room; and at the same instant

that she called out "Who is it?" a similar enquiry in a similar tone of voice was made from behind the door of the next room, in which slept the mistress of the house.

"Who is it? What's the matter? What do you want?" hastily asked Mrs. Harpeyden from behind the closed door.

"Oh, please to let me in! It's me! Pettifer! Here's something in my room! Do let me in!"

The two doors were opened simultaneously; and the three females in their night-dresses stood on the narrow landing in the moonlight.

"Whatever is the matter? What is in your room?" inquired Mrs. Harpeyden.

"Oh, it's coming! don't you hear it?" cried Pettifer, as she clung for protection to Mrs. Harpeyden. "It's a ghost!"

"Ghost! pack of nonsense, girl! I have never had such a thing in my house!" said Mrs. Harpeyden, speaking of it in the same way in which she would have indignantly denied the existence of bugs; but, nevertheless, considering that it was close upon midnight, not without some little apprehension that such a thing might really be the case, "I will go and see!" she said boldly.

"Oh don't! please don't!" cried the two domestics, clinging to her linen skirts.

The reputation of Mrs. Harpeyden's establishment, however, was felt by that lady to be at stake. If a ghost were added to the fixtures of her house, her occupation would be gone; therefore, the sooner that it was exorcised and laid, and the matter sifted, the better; and this was a duty which must be performed by herself. So she was marching boldly into Pettifer's room, with the two maids hanging on in her rear, when Pettifer, with a fresh paroxysm of alarm, whispered "Oh, listen! there it is again!"

There was no denying it. There it was again, as mysterious and peculiar as before; and, more than that, the ghostly crinoline came whirling and twirling towards them through the door, and on to the landing. Which of the three women screamed the loudest it would be hard to say. Mrs. Harpeyden subsequently repudiated the idea of having done so, and affirmed that the noise was made by the two silly servants. But, however that might be, there was a great scream, followed, or rather accompanied, by a rush of the three women through the nearest opened door,

which happened to be that of the mistress of the house; but they so impeded each other's movements that the ghostly crinoline had wriggled itself after them, and was close upon their heels and within the bedroom before they could shut it out. Seeing which, they could only leave the door open; and rushing to the sanctuary of Mrs. Harpeyden's bed, scream more loudly than ever.

Now it so happened that Edgar Melladew had not gone to bed. During his peregrinations that evening he had called in at Booty's to look at the early copies of the next morning's weekly papers, just received from London; and among others he had purchased the new number of *The Saturday Scarifier;* but he had not begun to read it until his mother and sister had retired to their own rooms. He had then cut its leaves, and, after awhile, came to a review of a new novel which engaged his attention. For this novel was written by a friend of his own, who had induced a publisher to risk the expense of printing it, on the condition that the author took three hundred copies of the work, and shared the net profits—when there were any. His friend had done so; and after presenting many copies of the book to

provincial newspapers and libraries, had bored all his friends by asking them to relieve him of the surplus stock by the purchase of a copy.

Edgar had been one of his victims; and although the author went about talking of "my novel," with as much complaisance as though it shared the rank of Bulwer Lytton's *chef d'œuvre*—whereas it was the veriest rubbish—and chuckling over it like a hen with one chick, it being his first essay in print—he had so disgusted his more immediate friends, that they brought a soured judgment to the reading of the book, and were perhaps induced to think worse of it than it really deserved. Edgar therefore rejoiced to see the handling that was given to the book in the *Scarifier's* most trenchant style, by the reviewer—who was none other than their most "eminent hand" for this sort of work, the caustic and brilliant writer, Mr. Nettle Stinger, of the Outer Temple, Barrister-at-Law. The sensations of being tomahawked are doubtless unpleasant in an eminent degree; but it may soothe the anguish of the victim to have the operation performed in a finished and gentlemanly style, rather than with coarse bungling. The heads-

man is a necessary personage; yet a culprit, doubtless, would be gratified if the High Sheriff were compelled to perform the last offices in place of a vulgar Jack Ketch.

Edgar was but half-way through Mr. Nettle Stinger's review when the gas suddenly went out; it being Mrs. Harpeyden's custom to turn it off at eleven o'clock, the last thing before she went to bed, unless an express stipulation and payment were made for a more prolonged illumination. So Edgar had struck a match and lighted his bed-room candle, and had sat up to enjoy his *Scarifier;* and hence it was that as soon as the screams of the three women reached his ears, he was able to put in an appearance with the most perfect propriety.

With the candle in one hand and the poker in the other, he mounted the stairs to ascertain if burglars had entered the house, or a fire broken out. His mother and sister did not appear to have been aroused by the noise; for all seemed quiet within their rooms as he passed their doors. On reaching the attic landing he saw three open doors, but no trace of fire or burglars.

"Shall I come in, Mrs. Harpeyden? What's

the matter?" he asked, as the cries of the three women directed him where to go.

"Oh, Mr. Melladew! I really don't know!" cried the solemn voice of his landlady. "I am afraid I shall faint. It is a ghost!"

"A ghost! oh, nonsense! can I come in and make an end of it?" enquired Edgar.

"Oh! if you would be so good!" was the response from within. "We are on the bed, and the curtains are drawn; but it is a situation that I never was placed in before."

"Nor I either," thought Edgar, as he stepped into the room. "Now, whereabouts did you hear this ghost?"

"I think it is under the dressing-table;" said Mrs. Harpeyden from behind the curtains; "but it has become quiet now."

"I see nothing but an article of dress," said Edgar.

"It was in that—a crinoline," said Mrs. Harpeyden; "not mine, but Mrs. Melladew's maid's; and it whirled and danced from her room into this."

"That it did, Mr. Edgar, like a mad thing," cried Pettifer.

The three frightened women had got upon the

bed, and behind its curtains had concealed themselves from view, as well as from the attacks of the ghost; but the knowledge that they were protected by a man who did not appear to be afraid of a ghost, and who was, moreover, armed with a poker, so far gave them courage that their curiosity began to gain a slight ascendancy over their fear. Enlarging their limited sphere of vision, they no longer peeped with one eye through chinks in the bed-curtains, but protruded therefrom their night-capped heads, as Mr. Pickwick did when he saw the middle-aged lady doing up her back hair in the double-bedded room at the Great White Horse at Ipswich. By so doing they were enabled to obtain a better view of Edgar's proceedings; and as he was not looking towards their place of refuge, the exposure of their heads was a matter of no great consequence. If he had returned her gaze, Mrs. Harpeyden's modesty may certainly have received a shock; though it is probable that her vanity would have suffered the deeper blow from being seen by a gentleman-lodger in such dishabille, and with her ringlets so curiously twisted up into small brown-paper parcels that it seemed surprising to think

how any human being could voluntarily assume such a painful head-dress before retiring for rest.

Unable to comprehend the extraordinary statement of the three women, that the ghost was in the crinoline; but imagining that an aggravated attack of nightmare had produced the hallucination under which they were evidently suffering, Edgar Melladew advanced to the now quiescent garment and seized it—an action that received the accompaniment of a half-suppressed shriek from the women. As he lifted it up the crinoline expanded to its full proportions; and it was not until he had raised it from the ground and held it out at arm's length, that he afforded an opportunity of escape to the ghost that had been ensconced beneath it.

It was a cat! a large black cat, which, with distended tail and fiery eyes, darted from its prison, and, dashing out of the room, was heard to precipitate itself down the stairs as fast as ever its legs could carry it. But it did not run so fast but that the eyes of the three women in the bed-curtains had been upon it, and had marked its discovery and hasty flight.

"Why! it's the cat that's got so fond of me!" cried Pettifer.

"Why, law, ma'm, if it isn't Smoke!" cried the other servant.

"Of course it is! I told you I had no ghosts in my house," said Mrs. Harpeyden, with a sigh of relief, though with a convenient forgetfulness of her late admission on this subject. For a moment she had almost laid aside the solemn and depressing manner that characterised her conversation, and spoke out briskly.

"And so," said Edgar, "the ghost has really ended in Smoke; as I suspect all other ghosts would if they were looked into."

The three women had withdrawn their night-capped heads into the seclusion of their bed-curtains and were holding a colloquy of explanations. "He must have been laid asleep on my black shawl," said Pettifer, "as I had put down on the ground by the chest of drawers; and I must have hung my crinoline over it without me seeing him."

"I thought you told me that you had turned him out of doors as usual," said Mrs. Harpeyden to her servant.

"So I thought he were, m'am; for I had missed him after supper," replied the girl.

"I daresay he followed me upstairs," said Pettifer; "for ever since I set foot in your doors, m'am, Smoke took a fancy to me and has always been on the quivvy after me." By *quivvy* it is presumed that Miss Pettifer must have meant *qui vive.*

"Let it be a warning to you for the future said Mrs. Harpeyden to her own domestic. And then, from the sanctuary of her bed, she addressed herself to her deliverer, resuming her accustomed depressing solemnity of manner: "I am exceedingly obliged to you, Mr. Melladew, and greatly regret that you should have been disturbed so needlessly."

"Pray don't mention it. Can I be of any further use?" asked Edgar. "Because if there are any more ghosts I shall be happy to lay them for you."

"It is the first that I have ever heard of in this house," said Mrs. Harpeyden's solemn voice from behind the curtains; "and I trust that it will be the last. Though, as you will perceive, Mr. Melladew, it is from the attachment that my

cat had formed to your own servant, that this little adventure has arisen. I hope, therefore, that if your worthy mother should have heard the noise, she will acquit me of any complicity in so disorderly and unusual a transaction. Having the happiness of being the great-niece of a dean, and so intimately connected with the professions of physic and divinity, I am well aware of the feelings of gentle-people, and know that they do not share the vulgar opinions concerning ghosts; therefore I sincerely hope that the little fright which these two servants have had to-night may not be to my prejudice with my lodgers."

"Oh, dear no! pray don't imagine that it will!" said Edgar, goodnaturedly, wishing to set Mrs. Harpeyden at her ease; although well aware that she had joined in the servants' terror. "So as the ghost has proved to be all Smoke, I will wish you good night, and hope that you won't sleep the less soundly for what has occurred."

As he went down stairs he found his mother at her door, wondering at the commotion she had heard over-head. His sister had slept through it. The matter was soon explained; and the night's adventure formed a basis for a good joke at

Pettifer's expense—any unusual expansion of her dress being, for some time after, attributed to the influence of the ghost of Cliff Place.

"And yet," said Edgar, as they talked over the subject the next morning at their breakfast, and Helen had been told of what had occurred to disturb the house during her sound slumbers, "and yet Pettifer's idea of a ghost tenanting a crinoline is not so very far-fetched after all. For have I not somewhere read or seen advertisements of a certain article called a *jupon squelette*, or skeleton petticoat? And if a woman can permit herself to be embraced by a skeleton during the day, she ought not to be very much astonished, if, in the dead of night, that skeleton should appear to her as a ghost."

And so the ghost of Cliff Place remained a merry memory with the Melladews; and although Mrs. Harpeyden offered to send away Smoke to some distant place of banishment, in condign punishment for his offence, yet Mrs. Melladew would not hear of this, and assured Mrs. Harpeyden that the blame, if any, chiefly attached to her own maid Pettifer, who she considered had received a valuable lesson on her vanity in pur-

chasing her new crinoline, from which she hoped that she might profit. In which judgment the great-niece of the Dean of St. Vitus concurred, with much depressed solemnity of manner, which was calculated to remind her hearers that she was no ordinary letter of lodgings, but a lady in reduced circumstances, whose father was a Myth, and whose mother was sprung from that old Scotch family, the Birds of Ayr.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE PAVILION.

THE afternoon of that Saturday found the Melladews in the gardens of the Pavilion in company with Miss O'Fay and her niece. Mrs. Melladew was talking to the little lady as to the motives that had led her to come to Brighton, and her thankfulness that she had been deceived in her daughter's state of health.

"I place the greatest confidence in Dr. Fleam's opinion," she said, "or I should have imagined that my dear girl's lungs were affected. But although this great cause for anxiety is removed, yet I shall not regret having brought her here; for in addition to the opportunities for sea-bathing, of which Helen began to avail herself yesterday, Brighton presents so thorough a change of scene to our quiet humdrum country life, that I think it has been of service to her already. And I feel

so very glad that she has been fortunate enough to meet with old friends, as this will make her visit still more agreeable."

"Ella is delighted to have met her old schoolfellow; and I am sure that Miss Melladew's friendship will be of service to her." Miss O'Fay was thinking of her niece's tendency to Mattins, and that it might be more counteracted by the Melladews' intimacy than by Miss Galloway's too evident proclivities to the Mutton's portion of Brighton life.

"We are expecting our curate, Mr. Ansley, in a few days," said Mrs. Melladew. "His sister and aunt arrived yesterday; and on our way here we called upon them in Rock Gardens and formed their acquaintance. The younger Miss Ansley appears a very sensible and amiable girl," continued Mrs. Melladew, with a mental reservation as to her opinion of the aunt, the elder Miss Ansley; "so that when her brother comes, our circle of friends will be enlarged. I almost regret not having advised my son to bring the carriage and servants. If we had our own horses too, my daughter would not be dependent upon hiring a horse for the rides she is anticipating,

and in which, I believe, Miss Hardy will be able to join her."

"Yes; Ella is quite looking forward to it," said the little lady; "for she is very fond of riding; and as it seems to do her health so much good, I do not discourage it. And she has not been able to have a ride since her cousin left. I do not at all approve of young ladies going out with their riding-masters; and, indeed, ever since that riding-master eloped with one of his pupils——"

"Eloped with a pupil!" exclaimed Mrs. Melladew, in horror.

"Yes, they loved and they rode away," replied Miss O'Fay; and she told her companion the circumstances of the case, and her resolution never to expose her niece to such a possible catastrophe. Then they had some talk on the proper education of young people; and then Mrs. Melladew referred again to that horse and carriage theme, which the fashionable throng that surrounded her in the Pavilion grounds appeared to bring before her mind with fresh force. "But my anxiety," she pleaded, "that his property should be nursed until such time as my place in his house can be

better filled by a wife, has induced me to cut down our expenses as much as possible; and Edgar is such an admirable son in every way that he is content to leave these matters entirely in my hands." And after this fashion the worthy lady unburthened herself to her new friend, whose mild and gentle manner seemed to invite and deserve the confidence that was reposed in her.

The while they were talking, they were strolling up and down that beautiful level stretch of lawn that forms the eastern frontage of the Pavilion. The day being fine, and no traces of the wild storm of the previous night being visible, save in the refreshed appearance of the foliage of the trees and plants, the regimental band, instead of playing in the Music Room, as they did on wet days, were mounted on their platform erected on this eastern lawn, and from thence were filling the air with delicious sounds. The gay mob of visitors were dressed,—not as people dress at Shrimpington, or Easton-on-the-Sands, or West-mouth-super-Mud, where old clothes and last season's fashions can be worn out in perfect obscurity,—but in apparel that would be assumed

for an appearance in the park or drive. They were emphatically dressed—not clothed in any style or in any way—but dressed, according to the latest requirements of fashion, in garments that wore the gloss of novelty and were innocent of hurt sustained in social fray or *mêlée*.

The men matched the women; and, indeed, were intended to do so in more senses than one; for was it not to that very end that one half of Brighton's forty thousand visitors had there met on that convenient and pleasant match-making territory? And the gentlemen, after their dull and unattractive fashion, were as smart as the ladies; for, the ornithological rule that bestows the gayest plumage on the male bird is very properly reversed in the world that is governed by the Mede and Persian rules of *la belle assemblée;* and Sartorian æsthetics have ruled that the male specimens of the *genus homo* should appear in a costume that is more useful than ornamental. A loose lounging-coat, an old wide-awake, and a pair of beach slippers, may do very well for such places as Shrimpington, but would be terribly out of place among the gay promenaders at the Brighton Pavilion, and would be as

rare a sight as a sailor with an umbrella or a cabman in spectacles. Therefore, after their manner and according to their respective lights, the gentlemen who tread the Pavilion lawn are expected to be dressed as fashionably as the ladies, and to have patronised Poole instead of Moses and Son or the sixteen shilling reversible trousers.

The gaily-dressed throng was strolling in the sunshine from one end to the other of the smooth Pavilion lawn, or sitting on the chairs that were placed by hundreds around the platform on which the band was playing, or close to the shallow steps of the Pavilion verandah, which steps ought to be treble their present width, in order to rid them of their cropped appearance and to give the idea of an adequate basement to the building. There were chairs too under the verandah and within the rooms, and people moved in and out through the open windows, and lingered in the cool shade of the stone verandah or amid the flickering shadows of the trees. On the further side of the smooth lawn was a wide gravel walk, beyond which was the raised bank, with its deep belt of trees and boundary wall, that shut in the gardens from the

Steyne. This gravel walk was fenced on either side by iron railings, and supplied at intervals with seats; and to this walk the public were freely admitted, sixpence being the small tax imposed for entrance to the lawn and building; and thus, with the exception of a slight iron fence, guarded by an old liveried park-keeper, the free hearers are brought upon a level with the paying hearers, and can listen to the military music and watch the gay throng from almost a better standpoint than if they were within the enchanted space. But fashion rules everything, and with the exception of invalids in Bath chairs, the visitors are to be found upon the lawn, and not upon the gravel walk. Thus, on two days in the week during the summer and autumn seasons, the Brighton people have the golden opportunity of attending, free of expense, an open-air concert of the best music and studying the latest fashions; for it is only on such occasions as flower shows that the railings are taken away, and the privileges of the outsiders also removed.

"Why, lawks, Mrs. Jones!" said a woman of the lower type of lodging-house keeper, as she stood on the gravel walk and spoke to a middle-

aged female on the lawn, whose clothes were as gaily coloured as a parrot's, and who wore a Gampian bonnet trimmed with a flowerpotful of cabbage roses and a plume of ostrich feathers; "Why, lawks, Mrs. Jones! who'd have thought of seeing you on the fashionable side of the rails?" When the gorgeously attired female thus replied: "Well, my dear, I'm here for the fust time, and you won't catch me here again; for besides the noosance of being stared at by all the imperent young fellers, there's the trouble of dressing and making oneself smart; and unless one comes here drest in one's best clothes, one looks pertickler."

Now this woman, who had strayed into the enclosure for exclusives, had at once recognized not only her mistake, but also the universality of "best clothes" among the promenaders; and doubtless the Melladews and their friends, including the Galloway party, who had just met them, were dressed in accordance with the recognised though unwritten rule of the place; and they were certainly "on the fashionable side of the rails;" and if the young ladies of the party looked "pertickler" in any special way, it was

for their good looks. Edgar saw no one who, in his opinion, could compete with Miss Hardy in appearance, notwithstanding the quiet simplicity of her dress. The gay peacocks might flaunt their trains before him, and vainly seek to allure him from the beautiful love-bird for whom he felt more admiration each time that he met her. In his eyes she was still the Beauty of Brighton, and worthy, had the custom of the day permitted it, to have been the reigning toast of that spot in which her aunt had once been so much admired. Few in that gaily attired throng, as they passed and repassed the simply dressed figure of Miss O'Fay, could have imagined that in that little lady they saw a link between the decorous modern days of the Pavilion and the wild times of its Regency fame and splendour. Few would have imagined that this placid-looking little lady, gravely walking on the Pavilion lawn, had once, within those Pavilion walls, whirled in the waltz in the arms of royalty, and, radiant in the semi-nude fashion of the day, been hailed as Fairy O'Fay and toasted as the Beauty of Brighton. Few would have surmised that so grave a woman could have once mingled in such gay scenes on that

very spot, and could have there lost her youthful heart to that "Big-fiddle Hardy" of the Prince Regent's Chamber Concerts, who was the companion of his royal master in many questionable transactions, and, who, as Captain Hardy of the Prince's household, had married Fairy O'Fay's sister, and become the grandfather of that stately beauty who was now the constant companion to the little lady.

Few could have surmised this from the outward appearance of Miss O'Fay, who in all that gay throng seemed the very last person who was likely to have borne her part in a Pavilion ball during the famous days of the Regency. Yet so it was; and the voluminously dressed ladies whose ample skirts swept the Pavilion lawn, if they bestowed any attention upon the simply attired little lady who was walking with Mrs. Melladew, would think no more of her than that she was an old-fashioned prim-looking old maid; and it could never have entered their imagination to conjure up a vision of that same little lady in her low-cut, short-waisted, blue sarsnet and white satin slip, twirling round the Pavilion ball-room to the music of Lieber Augustin, her slender waist not only

encircled by a white satin sash, but by the arm of the gratified Prince Regent.

But this vision, and many others of a like nature, often appeared to Miss O'Fay, and never more strongly than when, as now, she revisited the actual scenes of her early triumphs. But they came to her hallowed and chastened, for they brought freshly back to memory her long-lost love, that had been buried and put away in the silent grave of her own heart. All the rest was as nothing. Her peculiar creed had taught her to regard her youthful fame in the Pavilion circle as a dangerous snare, through which, indeed, she had been carried harmlessly, but on which she looked back with much sorrow; and the remembrance of the Prince Regent and his attentions to her gave her as little pleasure as did the sight of his bronze statue set up in the Steyne, with its face and curly wig piteously stained and bedrabbled, and with low-lived sparrows always perching on his outstretched hand.

The while Mrs. Melladew was imparting her motherly confidence to Miss O'Fay, as they strolled backwards and forwards along the

Pavilion lawn and enjoyed the music of the military band, Miss Hardy, who was on the other side of her aunt, was thus brought into a convenient position for overhearing their conversation; and the more she overheard the more she became convinced that Mr. Edgar Melladew was engaged to be married to that Miss Hawley, the baronet's daughter, of whom her aunt had told her. This was a circumstance that made Miss Hardy feel more at home with Edgar Melladew, as knowing that he was about to be married to another, and that she could therefore talk to him with less reserve than she usually felt in conversing with gentlemen who were known to be eligible matches, and for whose capture in the matrimonial noose young ladies who, like Ella Hardy, were well-nigh portionless might well be supposed to be exerting all their native and acquired charms. Ella Hardy's intense horror of anything approaching to conduct like this frequently helped to seal her tongue and freeze her natural warmth of manner into an assumption of cold indifference when she was casually brought into the close companionship of any young man who was alike wealthy and unmarried; and more than one

gentleman had been heard to say that although Miss Hardy was certainly very lovely and fine-looking, her beauty was that of a picture or statue, which was coldly indifferent to chaff and small talk. But they had never known the true Ella Hardy, whose over-sensitive nature had caused her in their company to shroud herself in a veil of reserve. This veil was dropped before Edgar Melladew, for if he was already engaged to be married, she could talk freely with him without feeling that she was endeavouring to win an eligible husband for her portionless self.

And Ella Hardy had heard all, or nearly all, that Mrs. Melladew was saying to her aunt, at the same time that she kept up a desultory chat with Edgar Melladew. For there are people who possess the faculty of listening to two persons at one and the same time, paying the requisite attention to the individual who is addressing them, and yet giving ear to a second conversation in which they are not taking a part. When, for example, Miss Sharpley is compelled to stand up in a quadrille with Mr. Softy, she appears to be listening most attentively to that young gentleman's criticism of the last new opera or picture,

but all the while does not lose one word of the dialogue that is going on just behind her back between Captain Snipe and Miss Plover. And again, when old Mrs. Howley appears to be concentrating all her faculties on the game of whist, and is really playing an excellent hand, she contrives to overhear the conversation that is being carried on by her two female friends on the adjacent sofa.

If Miss Hardy possessed the dual faculty it was a gift of nature, and she did not seek to abuse it to any mean purposes. On the present occasion she could not help feeling a certain kind of fascination in listening to what Mrs. Melladew was saying to her aunt concerning the personal qualities of her son and of his probable settlement in life, more especially as to her presumptions regarding an approaching union between him and Miss Hawley, "the amiable daughter of their excellent neighbour, Sir John Hawley." But at the same time that she felt herself listening to the mother's remarks, she heard every observation that Edgar addressed to her, and made the proper replies thereto. They were ordinary remarks on the most ordinary subjects,

the weather, the music, the gaiety of Brighton and its throng of visitors, and such other topics as might have been discussed, *ore rotundo,* in a crowd; and perhaps it was from their unexciting nature that Miss Hardy was enabled so far to divide her attention between the speakers on either side of her as to be enabled to lend one ear to Edgar Melladew and the other to his mother's conversation with her aunt. And the military band assisted her in this, for as Edgar Melladew did not care to talk much while they were playing, their music not only, as at a royal dinner, supplied the gaps of conversation, but also afforded her the opportunity to overhear those other remarks that possessed for her an interest amounting to fascination.

And thus they strolled in the sunshine up and down the Pavilion lawn, the garden thronged with fashion, the air filled with melody, the fantastic domes and minarets gleaming against a blue sky, the dark trees massed among belts of bright flowers, and, amid the gay crowd and pleasant tumult, Ella Hardy's thoughts were again and again repeating the idea, "He is about to be married to Miss Hawley." And, as

selfishness had no part or parcel in Ella Hardy's character, she was delighted to think that the brother of her old friend, Helen Melladew, was on the eve of an union that appeared to promise so much happiness and satisfaction.

Such then being the case, and the celibate condition of this eligible young squire being condemned to die its natural death, she could lay aside the armour of reserve that she was usually accustomed to wear in her friendly intercourse with rich young bachelors, and could talk to Edgar Melladew without any latent fear that she should lie under the suspicion of endeavouring to secure him for herself. And it was as well, perhaps, that she formed this erroneous idea concerning his engagement to Miss Hawley; for it enabled Edgar Melladew, without any delay or false conclusions, to gain an insight into Ella Hardy's real character, and to see her in her true light.

What impression she made upon him, time would doubtless show, but for the present he seemed to content himself with basking, as it were, in the sunshine of her loveliness; and as he glanced around on the hundreds of girls,

handsome, pretty, good-looking, showy-looking, fine-looking, dashing-looking, of all styles and complexions, whether Christian or Jewess, who bloomed as the gayest flowers in that Pavilion parterre, he complimented himself on the sagacity of his first impressions regarding Miss Hardy; and over and over again, as he strolled by her side on the Pavilion lawn, he said to himself—

"There is no one to compare with her. She is, indeed, the Beauty of Brighton!"

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE ELMS.

THE Melladew party had brought their promenade and conversation to a temporary lull, and were sitting in the shade beneath the elms.

"Aunt will be delighted," said Ella Hardy to Edgar, "to hear you say a good word for the Pavilion."

"Indeed I shall," said Miss O'Fay, for whom the subject had an unusual interest. "It seems to have become such a fashion to find fault with it, that I never meet with any one who is courageous enough to say a word in its defence."

"I suppose," said Miss Hardy, "that one set of visitors transmit their remarks to another set, like people handing on the 'Fiery Cross,' in Scott's poem; and when once it has become the fashion to condemn the Pavilion, it would be high-

treason to say a word to the contrary. People do not like to fly in the face of guide-books, but prefer to praise or condemn what the guide-book-maker tells them."

"Yes," said Edgar; "we English are like a flock of sheep, gregarious as to the places we visit, the clothes we wear, or the opinions we hold. It would only require a strong leader in the *Times* to make most people alter or remodel their opinions, and gradually be led to see that what they had been imagining to be black was in reality white, or of an intermediate hue. Certainly this Brighton Pavilion is one of the best-abused buildings in Europe, and I really think that it richly deserves a great deal that has been said against it."

"Oh, Mr. Melladew!" cried Ella Hardy, as she turned round upon him in surprise, and with a show of displeasure, "now you are recanting. I thought you were on aunt's side, who thinks the Pavilion the prettiest building she ever saw."

"I knew it when I was a girl," said Miss O'Fay; "and in my young days it was as novel a structure as the Crystal Palace has been in yours.

And it was such a centre of attraction, and gaiety, and fashion, and of all, I fear, that worldly people in those days set such store by,"—here the little lady heaved a sigh of compunction at the thought that she herself had once taken so much share and pleasure in that gay world, —"that perhaps we were led to think of it more highly than its architectural merits deserved. Yet Mr. Nash was accounted a good architect; and several things had conspired to make a fantastic building, such as this is, acceptable to the then prevailing taste."

"And that is a point too much forgotten," said Edgar.

"Thank you for putting in a pleader for the Pavilion," laughed Miss Hardy. "It was more than could be expected, after your shameful recanting."

"Lord Amherst's embassy to Pekin," continued Miss O'Fay, "and Southey's poems had combined to give a fashionable taste for everything that was *bizarre* and novel. China and Hindostan were on every one's tongue; and all that was wild, gorgeous, or extravagant was attributed to Chinese and Hindoo buildings. The germ of thought

in the popular mind bore fruit in the Pavilion; which in its way possessed the peculiar though irregular charms of 'Thalaba' and 'Kehama;' and like them had its popularity and admirers. But," apologised the little lady, "I am speaking the sentiments of my younger years; and although I have not greatly swerved from my own early opinion, yet I am well aware that now-a-days it would be considered a sort of heresy in taste to pronounce a favourable judgment on the Pavilion as an architectural building."

"I confess that I like it," said Edgar, as he looked in Ella's face, "despite my supposed recantation, because it is fantastic and quaint, and different from anything else that we have."

"Happily so!" interposed Miss Galloway, who usually went with the multitude in her opinions.

"Never mind!" laughed Edgar to Miss Hardy, "she prefers Mutton's to Mattins."

"Another evidence of my good taste!" said Miss Galloway. "There is the band beginning again. Let us stroll about, Nellie, and leave these people to find out beauties in the Pavilion—if they can." And as Mrs. Melladew said that she was tired and would prefer to sit where she

was, Helen Melladew and Kitty Galloway strolled off, attended by the two brothers of the latter young lady, who, greatly to Helen's amusement, began to tell her of a queer thing that had happened to them on the previous day, when their retriever wished to interfere with a young lady who was bathing. It was quite evident that they had not recognized Helen as the young lady in question.

"I like the Pavilion," said Edgar to Miss O'Fay, as they continued under the shade of the elms, watching the gay throng moving to and fro, and listening to the music of the military band. "I like it because novelty is refreshing; and it is gratifying to find a public building that is a copy of something else than a Grecian temple, or a Roman forum, or an Italian palazzo, and that openly revolts against Palladio and the orders of architecture. Sydney Smith's joke against its dome is not founded upon facts; for the dome of the riding school happens to be only twenty feet less in diameter than the dome of St. Paul's. And as to Cobbett's idea of placing the pointed half of a large turnip on the middle of a board with four smaller ones at the corners, and thereby

realizing the appearance of the Pavilion, we may remember that King's College Chapel at Cambridge has also been condemned as looking like a dining-room table turned upside down, with its four legs in the air—or as a series of decanters and wine-glasses. And whatever groundwork of truth there may be in these adverse criticisms, yet, it must be confessed that the onions and turnips and decanters and wine-glasses make a more effective sky-line than do the pepper-casters of the National Gallery. The Pavilion lacks height and a great many other things: but it is this sky-line, so beautifully broken, that I so much admire in it. Look how admirably those domes and fantastic minarets diversify the outline of the building as the sun glances upon them against the clear blue sky. Why, to my mind it is elegance itself—a thing of beauty!"

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Melladew," said the pleased Miss O'Fay. "Whatever may be said against George the Fourth, he certainly possessed good taste and a keen perception for what was beautiful in form; and I think that he could scarcely have been guilty of designing any architectural structure which should be so utterly

monstrous and offensive to the eye as people usually pretend that the Pavilion is. It was not an Aladdin's palace, created in a night, the whim of the moment; but its creation was spread over a space of twenty years, and its gradual development was the result of years of thought on the part of a Prince of great taste, assisted by one of the most talented architects of the day. It was the Prince Regent who was the creator of the Pavilion; he conceived the idea, and elaborated it into details; although it was necessarily left to Nash to carry them out. Unfortunately, it was turned to such uses, and acquired so ill a name, that the evil things which came to be spoken about it damaged its reputation, not only socially but architecturally also. And so people were not satisfied with condemning the Prince's doings in that building, but must also deal out equal blame upon the building itself; and indeed it was often much safer to sneer at and ridicule the Pavilion than the Prince; although the one was often made to stand for the other. Then, besides the fanciful nature of the building, there was such a sinful waste of money in the extravagance of its gorgeous details, that it is not to be

wondered at that the nation should have cried out against such monstrous luxury and profligate expenditure, especially when the people were called upon to pay for the Prince's extravagance."

"Yes," said Edgar: "I remember reading that when the civil list was brought before Parliament in 1816, and £534,000 had to be voted to meet the Prince Regent's expenses, an extra sum of £50,000 was asked for the furnishing of the Pavilion. No wonder that the nation looked upon it with loathing. Yet, ugly as were its belongings, its bad name does not affect the architectural appearance of the building."

"By no means," said Miss O'Fay. "I believe it to have been sinfully built and sinfully tenanted; but still the Pavilion, to me, has always been a beautiful object, although it has unjustly suffered from its evil reputation."

"It is certainly admirably adapted for these band-playings," said Miss Hardy, "and for promenades and flower shows, and other entertainments."

"Yes," said Edgar. "What would the Brighton people do without their Pavilion? There is

their Town-hall, that, 'like a tall bully, lifts its head and lies'——"

"My dear Edgar!" murmured his mother, who was unaware that he was making use of a quotation, and wished to check him from using any improper language in the presence of Miss O'Fay.

"And lies," continued Edgar, "if it says that it is completed; for although it is burdened with three useless porticoes, its sea-front, which might have been its finest, is left bare and plain. And then, after mounting ever so high up its numerous stone staircases, how much room is there left for two entertainments to go on in it at the same time without interrupting each other—as is often the case in the Pavilion? I was once at a Missionary Meeting in the music room, while Hanki-Panki, the great Indian wizard, was doing his conjuring in the banqueting room; and the two very opposite entertainments did not interfere with each other."

"You at a Missionary Meeting!" said Helen, who with Miss Galloway had stopped for a while in their promenade; "don't you mean at the conjuror's?"

Edgar shook his head and laughed, while

Miss Hardy looked gratified, and Miss O'Fay also seemed pleased.

"I dare say he went to hear a pet Bishop," whispered Miss Galloway; and her elder brother Frederick was understood to express an opinion that the Bishop of Oxford was a stunner to speak.

"Although," said Edgar, "I give a qualified praise to the Pavilion for its mongrel architecture, and because I find it standing, yet I would by no means be thought to justify the sinful waste of money in the erection of a Marine Pavilion from which a sight of the sea can only be obtained, I believe, from two of the upper windows. But still, as it was here and had all been paid for, and as, if taken down it could only have fetched a very small sum, but if left standing could be converted into needful accommodation for the town's requirements; then, I say, that considering these things, and that the building and these pleasant grounds were offered to the town at what tradesmen call an alarming sacrifice, it would have been worse than egregious folly on the part of the town's representatives to have let the purchase slip. If the building had been dismantled, its site most

probably would have been occupied by a huge limited-liability hotel, or a square of shops and lodging-houses. But as it is, the Pavilion is not only excessively useful, but I will even go so far as to pronounce it ornamental—ornamental, that is, in the sense in which so many of our ornaments and articles of luxury take a *bizarre* and *outré* shape; and the Pavilion still maintains its old pre-eminence as the leading lion of Brighton."

Miss O'Fay was pleased to hear Mr. Melladew express an opinion in which she so entirely coincided on the building with which so many of the best memories of her youth were connected. And, as Miss Hardy was also pleased to think that her aunt was pleased, Edgar's audience, though scanty, was appreciative. Any way, it was highly agreeable to lounge in the shade of those spreading elms, and watch the rainbow medley of colours in the dresses of the dense throng that moved to and fro over the green and level lawn, while the exhilarating music of the military band was echoed over the Steyne, and the fanciful domes and minarets clustered in a picturesque group against the bright blue sky.

"If this scene were lost to Brighton," said

Edgar, " the queen of watering places would lose one of the brightest jewels of her crown. For, whatever may be said against the building, I think that every one must speak in praise of its surroundings, and acknowledge that the Pavilion grounds and gardens present the solitary piece of landscape that can be enjoyed by the Brighton visitor. For how many visitors ever see the inside of Brighton park? and as for the North Steyne, and the Level, and Brunswick Square, and Adelaide Crescent, and Lewes Crescent, and all the other crescents and squares and gardens that can boast of their trees and shrubs—their plantations are as yet too young to have arrived at their full growth and picturesqueness; and many of them abound rather in specimens of the tamarisk than in elms or oaks. But these Pavilion gardens can boast of real timber—trees that bear the evident marks of age—an actual elm avenue, and a veritable rookery. Where else in Brighton could you sit under such elms as these, and light upon such a piece of greenery? Look along its three-mile length, and you will scarcely see anything green except the verandahs. That seems to me to be the great drawback of Brighton; it is

a town on the sands, without foliage. Of course you remember the old joke that its only tree is its beach; and that Dr. Johnson declared that the country was so desolate, that if any one wished to hang himself in desperation for being condemned to live in Brighton, he would be unable to find a tree on which to tie a rope. And therefore, not only for the building itself, but even still more for its trees and gardens, I admire and rejoice in the Pavilion, and say that if the town had let it slip out of its hands, and had allowed its area to be covered with bricks and mortar, it would have robbed Brighton of one of its best known and most attractive features. The building of the new pier, and the widening of the road by Brill's, and the grand junction, with all the other improvements of the place, would never have atoned for the obliteration of the fantastic Pavilion and its beautiful gardens."

Edgar had no need to apologize to Miss O'Fay for descanting at such length upon this theme, for it was one which possessed for her the very greatest interest; and she was delighted to find that Mr. Melladew thought with herself on this subject, and that he had the boldness to profess

an opinion that was so much opposed to the general public judgment. Perhaps the young squire may not have been altogether disinterested in explaining his views on the Pavilion to the little lady, but may have had some ulterior motive in ingratiating himself in Miss O'Fay's good opinion, more especially as he saw that by so doing he was also giving pleasure to Miss O'Fay's niece. Motives that we do not care to scrutinize too closely not unfrequently influence us even in our best actions; and if they lead to good results, we need not be over hasty in condemning them.

The band brought its music to a conclusion, and the gay crowd began to disperse. The Galloways went away, leaving the Melladews with Miss O'Fay and her niece to journey back together to Cliff Place. As they came round by the Library into North Street to take their fly, Mrs. Melladew spied Hannington's, and must needs go in there to enquire the price of a shawl that was displayed in one of the windows. Once within the shop, it appeared to be hopeless to rescue her therefrom; and as the other ladies seemed to be equally interested in the multitudinous array of feminine

allurements that were spread around them, Edgar, being loath to leave the captivating society of Miss Hardy, remained with them even to the end; and then, placing them in their fly, walked round by Mutton's, and so by way of the King's Road to Cliff Place.

"Why, I never knew you take such a dose of shopping before," said his sister, as they sat at dinner.

"I was studying human nature in the buyers and sellers," replied Edgar. "The patience of a draper's assistant must rival that of Job. Sooner than take his post I would break stones in the road, or would rather be a kitten and cry 'Mew.'"

"My dear Edgar!" remonstrated his mother, "I am sure the young men were most attentive and obliging."

"And yet you could not make up your mind to purchase a single thing!"

"I like to look about me first," said his mother; "but I shall probably go there again on Monday, and see that shawl in a better light."

"You won't catch me there again," growled Edgar.

"Unless 'the Beauty' should be with us—eh?" asked Helen.

But her brother would not respond to this, but said that they must try to arrange for a ride on the Monday, and have a canter on the Downs, which it appeared Helen and Miss Hardy had already agreed to do. So this was something to look forward to.

That night, shortly before going to bed, Miss O'Fay said to her niece, "Mr. Melladew is one of the most sensible young men with whom I ever met."

"Because he fell in love with the Pavilion, auntie dear?" queried the young lady. And Ella Hardy said no more, though she thought of his having fallen in love with Miss Hawley, the baronet's daughter; and she said to herself, "How happy she will be!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A GALLOP ON THE DOWNS.

THE projected ride on the Monday duly came off, and was greatly enjoyed, Ella Hardy appearing in fresh charms in her riding habit and hat, with her dark hair tightly done up with a crimson ribbon. It was a very blowy day, and those lady equestrians who adopted the fashion of dishevelled ringlets or Alexandra curls had to ride with their hair streaming in the wind and tossing over their eyes; so that they who, like Ella Hardy and Helen Melladew, had clubbed their hair in tight braids not only looked all the better for the fashion, but were less incommoded by their own tresses.

A strong sou'-wester had been blowing all the previous evening and through the night; and so wild a sea was dashing in foam upon the shore that

bathing had been an impracticable pastime. They therefore took the ride instead, Edgar procuring the horses and pioneering the party to the Downs, picking up on the way Kitty Galloway and her two brothers. Then they had a gallop round the racecourse—literally so indeed, for, setting rules and regulations at defiance, Kitty Galloway had popped over the rails and cantered along the enclosure that encircled the summit of the White Hawk Down, wherein a few weeks previously the high-mettled racers had contested for the cups and stakes. Her two madcap brothers followed her example, which becoming contagious to the other horses and their riders, the whole party of six were presently scampering over the forbidden ground. Perhaps it was because stolen joys are said to be the sweetest, that this, their first gallop on the Brighton Downs, gave to Edgar Melladew and Ella Hardy so much pleasure for the present, and afterwards in the retrospection. Frederick Galloway too had fallen over head and ears in love with Helen Melladew, who was two years his senior, and whom he little imagined to be the heroine of his retriever's adventure; and as for the present he contented

himself with endeavouring to gain her affection by exhibiting feats of horsemanship, it seemed highly probable that he would bring himself to grief by the desperate way in which he leaped his hack in and out of the railings.

Not only did they enjoy their canter in the strong wind over the short springy turf, but also the magnificent view on all sides, more especially over Brighton and out to sea; for the sea on this day was unusually grand, tossed by the sou'-wester into waves and foam, and sending its "white horses" in a mad gallop to the beach. The chain-pier was drenched by the spray, and the groynes, washed over by the high waves, were formed into so many waterfalls. Far below them, at the foot of the precipitous pitch of the Downs, was stretched the long line of houses, tapering to a mere mask of buildings at Kemp Town, and widening in dimensions as it approached the centre, and was swollen to its goodliest proportions on either side of the valley that opened up from the Steyne.

As they reined in their horses by the Grand Stand—when they had again left the rails and were no longer on trespass—they pointed out to

each other the Grand Hotel and all the other salient objects in the view of the town, including, of course, the unfinished tower of St. Paul's, to which Kitty Galloway maliciously directed Ella Hardy's attention, with the remark, "I suppose Mattins is now going on there. For my part, I wish that I was at Mutton's, for I am getting very hungry with galloping in this fierce wind."

"And I," said Helen, anxious to turn the conversation, "feel thirsty enough to enjoy a draught of Pordage's Nectar. Ella, we must bring mamma and Miss O'Fay here the next time we drive out, to see this magnificent view."

"I found another view on Saturday night," said Edgar, "that I must really take you to see; but our visit must be made on a dark night. I was coming from the railway station, along Clifton Terrace,—from whence, in the day-time, there is one of the very best views in Brighton,—when I saw, far away out at sea, and above the lights of the town, a great illuminated dome, which had a most spectral but beautiful effect. It was the large gas-lighted dome of the Grand Hotel; but, from its height, and from the posi-

tion from whence I saw it, it appeared to be altogether disconnected from the town and the land, and at least a mile out at sea. And what added greatly to the pictorial effect was a fleet of fishing boats, that were really at some distance out at sea, each with its tiny light flickering through the darkness, and looking like moving stars to the great moon of the dome, which was stationary and central. The effect was really very beautiful and startling."

"Miss Melladew," here interrupted Frederick Galloway, to whom the prospect of a present flirtation was far preferable to that of any promised landscape or seascape, however beautiful or startling, "I will bet you half a dozen of Hannington's best gloves that you won't get first to the windmill."

"Oh! but it is of no use betting with ladies," laughed Helen; "for if we lose, you know we never pay."

"Never mind," responded the young gentleman; "let us have a race all the same. The wager shall be for nothing. We can say it is for love, if you like," suggested this artful young gentleman; although he by no means intended

that his love should be accepted as a synonym for nothing.

"Come along, Nelly," cried Kitty Galloway; I will take care that he shall pay the gloves if we win; for I intend to go shares. I want new gloves dreadfully." And she gave the signal, and away they went, helter-skelter, in their gallop to the windmill. Edgar Melladew and Ella Hardy followed in their rear at a soberer pace, Edgar describing to his companion that famous Volunteer battle of the White Hawk Down, on the Easter Monday of the previous year, at which he had been one of the pleased spectators.

Altogether they had a very enjoyable morning. Helen Melladew's first acquaintance with the Brighton Downs was so much to her satisfaction that she determined that it should not be nipped in the bud, but should be resumed at every possible opportunity. Her admirer, Frederick Galloway, not only endeavoured to win her affections by exhibiting his daring acts of equestrianism, in popping backwards and forwards over the rails until he had broken or displaced several—which, although preferable to the breaking or dislocating of his own ribs and bones, yet eventually heavily

taxed his purse, when the watchful proprietor of the broken fences came upon him for damages—but he also talked in inflated language as to the grand deeds he should perform during the ensuing season with the Southdown pack and the Brighton harriers.

"Why, Fred," said his sister, cruelly taking him down a peg, "if you were to follow the hounds down a precipice like that, you would tumble over your horse's head; or, if you managed to hold on round his neck, you would slip over his tail as he crawled up the opposite hill." And she pointed to one of those natural ravines that indent the surface of the Downs, and make them into ups and downs, especially to horsemen who have to follow a rattling burst with the Brookside.

Mr. Frederick was highly indignant at this, and was strongly tempted to prove to the charming Hellen Melladew that he could really adhere to the pig-skin, however acute might be the angle of his horse's back, and however steep a gradient the natural formation of the Downs might offer to his onward progress: but certain misgivings as to the surefootedness of his hack may have caused him to entertain doubts on the satisfactory completion

of his feat of horsemanship; and if he should in any way fail, and should really be reduced to hold on round his hack's neck, or slide over his tail, then he would not only degrade himself before the eyes of the numerous riding parties and young ladies' schools who were seeking air and exercise on the Downs, but—which would have lacerated his feelings in their tenderest point—he would have rendered himself ridiculous in the eyes of the adorable Helen Melladew. He therefore contented himself by grumbling to his sister, in admonitory slang: "Shut up, Kitty! shut up! and keep your remarks for *Punch's* old Briggs. You forget that I had a day with the Brookside last season, and I wasn't far behind Saxby's green coat when it came to the finish."

"What!" said Miss Kitty, with an assumed air of incredulity, "and was there really a finish?"

"Of course there was," said Frederick, indignantly; "why shouldn't there have been?"

"I thought that the hares got away into the rabbit-holes," rejoined Kitty, "when they were not mobbed to death by the field."

"Oh!" said her brother, "you are thinking of the Brighton harriers, not of the jolly Brooksides.

I wasn't talking about the half-crown jelly-dogs. They're not a regular subscription pack," he explained to Miss Melladew, "like the Brookside and Southdown; although you may, if you like, pay down five guineas for the season and get rid of the capping; but, if you don't do this, you have to tip half-a-crown every time you join them. That's why we call them the half-crown jelly-dogs. But they're rare fun, and it's quite a sight to see the field they draw on a fine day, when the visitors and excursionists turn out in flies to look at the sport, unless they happen to be mounted on a hack to join in it. And, whatever Kitty may think, it's none so easy to hold your own in a break-neck country like this, when there's a rattling burst, and you are called upon to race down a hill like the side of a house; and keep yourself from riding over the dogs, and from being ridden over by any Tooley-street tailor whose hack has bolted with him." And Frederick Galloway felt quite conceited at the thought that he had "held his own" on such an occasion and in such company.

"I can well believe that," said Helen, desirous to heal the young gentleman's wounded dignity.

"And although there are not many fences except the earthen dykes, yet I can readily imagine that a run with the hounds over these Downs demands as much horsemanship as would be required in our own Hopshire or in the Pytchley country."

"That it does indeed, Miss Melladew," said Frederick Galloway, with all his sister's heartiness of manner, and with, if possible, increased admiration of his charming companion. "And there is as much danger too, when you come to think of these rabbit-holes, and rotten dykes, and precipitous pitches. If there isn't much timber-jumping, yet there's quite enough on the Downs to bring a man to grief and to prevent him from being well up with the hounds. I wish you were going to stop for the hunting season, Miss Melladew. You'd have such fun!"

Helen Melladew did not doubt it, but she told Frederick Galloway that she never hunted herself, and did not approve of ladies doing so, and that she only rode occasionally to the meet to see the hounds throw off. "But we had better pull up and wait for the others to join us," she said, as she turned and perceived that they had somewhat

outstripped the rest, the while they had cantered along in conversation. So they reined in their horses to a walk.

"Your servant, young gentleman," said a farmerish-looking man, as he rode up on a rough pony and addressed himself to Frederick Galloway. "You've given me a bit of a chase, and I began to be afeir'd that I mightn't get up wi' you. You've blow'd my pony!"

"And you may be blow'd too," replied Frederick Galloway, who was occasionally smart in repartee, when it could be delivered in the vernacular.

"That may be, or it may not," grunted the man; "any way, I've got a crow to pluck with you, my young master."

Now, as Frederick Galloway was assiduously cultivating on his cheeks tufts of hair that he fondly hoped would shortly be developed into wing whiskers of the most fashionable and ferocious kind, he felt that it was rather hard lines for him to be addressed in the presence of the beloved one as "young master," and accordingly his "monkey," as he phrased it, was decidedly put up. "A crow to pluck, have you? you croaking old agricultural raven!" he said, in a jeering

tone, anxious to exhibit to Miss Melladew his powers of chaffing a clod. "And what may it be, you singularly uninteresting bucolical party?"

"There's no need to talk o' colics but when you're griped," replied the man, enigmatically. And then coming to the point, he abruptly said, "What I want to know is, why have you been trespassing, on and off, on the other side of them rails?" and he indicated the direction with his stick.

"To exercise my horse," said Frederick Galloway, curtly.

"But why did you break the rails?" demanded the other.

"I didn't; it was my horse," was the reply. "Now, don't cut up rough about it," he added, fearing he was "in a box," as he termed the situation, and that he should come off but second best in the encounter; "if there's any damage done, name your price, and I'll pay it."

"Ah! now you comes to business," said the agricultural gentleman, somewhat mollified, "and talks more sensible. Well, there's a matter of five good rails broke, as 'll never be fit for aught but firewood."

"Which," interposed Frederick Galloway, "being a valuable commodity in Brighton, knocks off half the damage. Go ahead, old shaver!"

The old shaver took the hint, and went ahead very considerably. "And then there are two postes as is loosened; and looking at the wood and the work as it'll take to mend 'em, I should say it'd be about a matter o' 10s. or 12s., but half-a-sufferin 'll satisfy me."

"I daresay it would, you unconscionable old party," rejoined Frederick Galloway; "but it won't satisfy me. However, as I don't want to haggle with you and detain this lady any longer, if you'll say three half-crowns, you shall have them."

"Very well; done then," said the other, who would have been well satisfied with half the money; "and," he added, as he pocketed the half-crowns and rode off, "if you'd break a few more rails at the same rate, I'd be obleeged to you, my young master."

"I dare say you would, you swindling bucolical file!" shouted Frederick Galloway, who was more enraged at being addressed, in the presence of

the beloved one, as "young master" than at losing his money.

"Who's your farmer friend, Fred?" asked his sister Kitty, as she rode up with the others. And then Mr. Fred, as a punishment for having chaffed his opponent, had to put up with a great deal of chaff himself. But this only increased the merriment of the party as they rode home, with famous appetites for luncheon, and with cheeks all aglow from the exercise and high wind. Edgar Melladew and Ella Hardy, who had kept together the greater part of the morning, had fully enjoyed their first gallop on the Downs and the friendly chat that had made the hours pass all the more agreeably.

Mrs. Melladew and Miss O'Fay had also passed the morning very agreeably, after their own fashion, or rather after the fashions; for they had been two hours in Hannington's shop, where, notwithstanding the simplicity of her own attire and the strictness of her notions with regard to sumptuary regulations, the old Adam in the little lady's nature was sufficiently powerful to make her enjoy looking over the richest novelties in every article of feminine dress,

although she would not for any consideration have bought or worn a fractional portion of the beautiful or resplendent things that were shown her. But her good taste was useful to Mrs. Melladew, and the two elder ladies probably passed the morning as pleasantly as did the younger ones.

"Here is a kind note from Mrs. Grimsby Grout for to-morrow evening," said Mrs. Melladew, as they sat at luncheon. "She includes you, Edgar, in her invitation."

"Very polite of her," observed Edgar, carelessly. "A tea-fight, isn't it? How bad this bottled beer is! We must change our shop. The man ventured to assure me that we should get no good beer in Brighton till after the October brewings. We'll see! I think they have got Bass and Allsopp's empty bottles, and filled them up with their own concoction."

"It certainly is not very good," said Helen, who was thirsty after her ride. "Poor Mr. Pordage would scarcely approve of it for his Nectar."

"Mrs. Grimsby Grout," said Mrs. Melladew, who felt that they were straying from the subject,

"has included you in her invitation, Edgar. Shall you accept it?"

"What, the tea-fight?" asked Edgar.

"She calls it a Bible tea and exposition," said his mother.

"Don't know what it's like," replied Edgar; "but it doesn't sound in my line."

Mrs. Melladew looked rather shocked. "My dear Edgar! I dare say it would do you good."

"Ella is going," said his sister, as an inducement, "and Kitty Galloway."

"Yes," replied Edgar; "but that would only make it the more tantalizing if one was cut off from all small talk. Besides, I should probably go to sleep, and snore at the most impressive moment, and scandalize the whole affair. So I think I'm better away, more especially as I want to go up to the station in the evening to meet Ansley."

"Oh yes, by the way, he will be coming to-morrow evening," said Helen.

"You little hypocrite! as though you had forgotten it!" said her brother.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. GRIMSBY GROUT'S ENTERTAINMENT.

SO Mrs. Melladew and Helen went to Mrs. Grimsby Grout's without Edgar. But he saw them off, having put them into a fly in company with Miss O'Fay and Ella Hardy; and then strolled up to the station to meet Gilbert Ansley, and hear his home news and report of the game, as well as to receive the hamper that he was to bring from Melladew.

The four ladies from Cliff Place were somewhat late in reaching Mrs. Grimsby Grout's, and found the rest of the party already assembled there. The drawing-room was quite full, the company, with four exceptions, being limited to specimens of the fair—or, rather, female—sex. The quartet of gentlemen was composed of Mr. Grimsby Grout, who was an individual of no character at all, and was only remarkable for

having married Mrs. Grimsby Grout, and for the exceeding baldness and shiny nature of his head; Mr. Gaunt, who had published a book on the Apocalypse in which everything was explained by decimal fractions; the Rev. Micaiah Mowle, the esteemed minister from Clapham; and the Rev. Carissimus Jones, D.D., who, if not precisely an Independent minister, was a minister who was independent of the Established Church. The rest were ladies of various ages, who were more or less occupied in tea and conversation.

Mrs. Grimsby Grout was not only a lady who was reputed to possess "a large heart," but was undoubtedly in possession of large means, with which she did much good. Her religious temperament disposed her to the assemblage of her friends to that species of entertainment which might be termed a tea and expounding party, at which Mrs. Melladew and her daughter had now been invited to assist, and to which Miss O'Fay attributed great value. It was one among those many things that the little lady deemed would be so beneficial towards "forming the character" of her niece. Mrs. Grimsby Grout's large heart led her to entertain a great partiality

for "ministers of all denominations," and to repose unbounded confidence in their "expositions," however mysterious or contradictory. A sojourn at her favourite watering-place generally enabled her to gratify her peculiar idiosyncrasy; and more than one minister had all his expenses for a sea-side trip defrayed by the liberal and large-hearted lady, under the good-natured plea that his usefulness to his flock would be increased by a fortnight's relaxation at Easton-super-Mud, or whatever watering-place Mrs. Grimsby Grout might be patronizing. Then she seized him for one or more tea and expounding parties; and as this was all that was asked of him in return for his board and lodging and travelling expenses, he got off very easily. Mr. Grout had that perfect confidence in his wife, and that lack of distinctive character in himself, that he merely nodded his bald and shining head to her propositions, and meekly assented to all her plans. At her tea parties he occasionally imbibed more tea than was favourable to a person of dyspeptic tendencies; otherwise, these entertainments and expositions passed over him with no more effect than rain over a duck's back. An impressive nod or shake

of his bald head, and an occasional monosyllabic reply to an immediate observation, was the only active part that he was required to take in these proceedings; but their sedative and tranquillizing effect was shown in his increasing rotundity of person.

Mrs. Grimsby Grout received her four visitors from Cliff Place at the door of her drawing-room, and expressed the great delight it gave her to make the personal acquaintance of any friends of Miss O'Fay's; and she then led forward Mrs. Melladew and her daughter to introduce them to the reverend lions of the evening. The Rev. Micaiah Mowle, teacup in hand, was leaning in a graceful attitude against the chimney-piece, conversing languidly with one of the prettiest young ladies in the room on "the really interesting points" connected with his favourite mission to the lost tribes. He was delicately scented, had black ambrosial whiskers, and wore a diamond ring on each little finger. The well-known engraving of this esteemed Clapham minister, signed "Yours truly, Micaiah Mowle," depicted him, *minus* the teacup, in a similarly graceful *posé*, which he was so much in the habit of assuming (either consciously

or unconsciously) that the few unreformed and wicked wags who were wont to meet him in society were accustomed to term it his "yours-truly attitude." As he had a good figure, and never neglected his dress, but had his clothes made by one of the most fashionable tailors, his yours-truly attitude displayed him to the best advantage and made him to take rank among the lady-killers. He acknowledged his introduction to Mrs. and Miss Melladew in the most courteously polite way, and then resumed his conversation and yours-truly attitude, while the two ladies were presented to the other reverend lion.

The Rev. Carissimus Jones, D.D., was a man of a very different stamp and outward appearance to that of Mr. Mowle. Mr. Jones was thick-set, awkwardly made, and still more awkwardly clad —perhaps by contract, or according to some imperfectly understood system of "self-measurement;" he had large feet and coarse hands, wore no shirt-collar, and would, altogether, have been improved by a little scent. His posture was decidedly antithetical to the yours-truly attitude of Mr. Mowle, for he was seated uneasily on the

edge of an easy-chair, with his third cup of tea in one hand, a hot buttered tea-cake in the other, and a yellow handkerchief spread over his lap to protect his best Sunday suit from greasy crumbs. He did not offer to imperil his clothes by rising from his position when Mrs. Melladew and her daughter were presented to him, but contented himself by ducking his head, and saying "Your servant, ladies!" after which he allowed himself to be absorbed in his tea and tea-cake, and maintained a profound silence. He may have been nursing his powers for the coming Exposition.

"Highly gifted man!" murmured Mrs. Grimsby Grout to Helen Melladew, who had considerable difficulty in restraining a smile. "We made his acquaintance last year. Our portion was Yarmouth. Poor man! he was confined to the dwellings of Jacob for many years."

Helen did not know what this phraseology might mean, and as no answer seemed to be required of her she did not attempt to make one. And Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who was very elliptical and parenthetical in her speech, maundered on, "He had a sore struggle to burst his bonds; but he overcame. Such poor creatures as we are!

He had a chapel built expressly for him; and he fills it to overflowing. This is Mrs. MacGorgon," and she introduced Helen to a turbaned lady, who completely filled a large easy-chair, and wore a swan's-down tippet, which gave her somewhat the appearance of a venerable goat; though Mrs. Grimsby Grout assured Helen in a private whisper that the lady in question was "a mellow and ripened Christian."

Mrs. MacGorgon—of the Gorgons of that ilk, Stonieblinkie Castle, N.B.—looked even more mellowed and ripened than her sister, Miss Medusa, who sat near to her; which is saying not a little: for although Miss Medusa had for a number of years past looked upon herself as a gushing young thing, yet, as Frederick Galloway would have said, she was by no means a chicken. He was not there, as a matter of course, although his sister had been asked to bring him with her; for Kitty was there, having come, as she wickedly professed, "for the fun of the thing;" and Miss Medusa had fastened herself upon her, probably recognizing her to be a companion gusher.

"Perhaps you will find a seat on the couch, by your friend Miss Galloway," said Mrs. Grimsby

Grout, as she settled the two younger ladies from Cliff Place, and then escorted Mrs, Melladew and Miss O'Fay to some more matronly friends at the other side of the room.

"I am so glad you and Nellie are come," whispered Kitty Galloway to Ella Hardy. "You are so late that I began to fear you had shied the affair and bolted. That bony party on the other side, Nellie, in the pink silk, with the blue spectacles, and her hair scragged off her forehead, is a Miss Gaunt—a live authoress. I fancy, that she must be great fun."

Miss Gaunt certainly did not look so; but perhaps Miss Galloway may have meant that if she was not funny herself she was the cause of fun in others; and undoubtedly her published works had been received by certain critics in a very different spirit from that in which they were designed. Her three books of poems, "The Harp of Judah newly Strung," "The Trump of Triumph," and "Breathings of an Overcharged Heart," had been suffered to take their own course; but her small prose work, "Dancing, a Device of the Enemy," had formed the text of one of the *Saturday Scarifier's* most amusing articles.

Apart from her own literary attainments, and those of her brother, Miss Gaunt had once possessed an aunt who had taken tea at the Thrales' Brighton house in company with Dr. Johnson; and this family connection had induced Miss Gaunt to model her conversational style on the plan of that of the great lexicographer.

Mrs. MacGorgon, smoothing down her swan's-down tippet and settling her turban in a way which, in the language of the prize-ring, would have shown that she "meant mischief," evidently considered that, as the time for exposition was not yet come, and as Mr. Mowle still maintained his graceful yours-truly attitude against the chimney-piece, and Mr. Jones had commenced a fresh cup of tea and buttered tea-cake, she should be doing her duty by preparing the minds of the young ladies seated near her by a little cheerful conversation. As Kitty Galloway appeared to be the most light-hearted of the group, Mrs. MacGorgon signalled her out by the pointed remark—"We live in very critical times, Miss Galloway."

"Do we?" said Kitty, innocently; and she endeavoured to recollect if she had read in the newspapers anything very *apropos* to this remark.

"Very critical times, Miss Galloway," said Mrs. MacGorgon, who delivered her opinions solemnly and oracularly; "I may say, times of extremely imminent peril."

"I suppose it must be a very critical time," replied Kitty, who had rapidly run over in her own mind the subjects of the American war, the struggle in Poland, and affairs in Prussia, Denmark, Greece, and Italy. "Indeed, I remember hearing papa say so; he used the very same expression. He is in the House, you know." Major Galloway, in fact, could place after his name the coveted initials, M.P.

But Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who was good-naturedly moving about among her guests to see that they were all well-cared for, overheard these words and misunderstood the phrase; and in her parenthetical and elliptical way she said, "In the house, is he? Oh, I am glad of that, my dear, for we are very short of gentlemen; though I certainly didn't expect the major, although I had mentioned it to your mamma to beg him to come; for ever since we were playfellows together we have almost lost sight of each other; but she did not tell me he was in the house."

"You misunderstood me," said Kitty Galloway, as soon as her hostess allowed her to put in a word; "I meant the House of Commons—Parliament. Papa is not here; he left Brighton this morning, and has gone to the moors."

Mrs. Grimsby Grout's thoughts ran in certain tracks; and as her knowledge of the Moors, as a people, had been greatly increased by some anecdotes that she had heard at a recent missionary meeting, she concluded that Miss Galloway's father had departed on a special mission to the Moorish people. She replied, therefore, "Really now! how self-sacrificing. But if we water, we shall be watered again, my dear. What a noble field he will have for his exertions."

"It was a great deal of ground, I know," said Kitty, continuing to hold her own ideas of the moors; "because Mr. Manton and Lord Stalkington have gone shares with him: and it costs them—oh! I don't know how much."

The large heart of Mrs. Grimsby Grout expanded. "Ah, my dear Miss Galloway!" she said; "no one *can* know the sacrifices such a step requires. But we must spend and be spent, and not stay to count the cost. Those poor, uncul-

tivated Moors! and what a lesson to the nobility and landed gentry! and so many barren tracts yearning, positively yearning, for crumbs of truth. Ah, my dear! your good papa will have his reward. After all, we are but worms." And Mrs. Grimsby Grout shut her eyes and slowly shook her head.

"I suppose we are," said Kitty, meekly, beginning to suspect that she had been playing at cross purposes, and had better abstain from making any original observations. But she slightly raised her eyebrows in a significant manner as she glanced to Ella Hardy and Helen Melladew; and if any young lady could so far forget herself as to wink her eye, more especially on such an occasion and in such company, then Miss Kitty Galloway was guilty of that vulgar action. Her two friends busied themselves over the teacups and little rolls of bread-and-butter; and, with their aid, contrived to behave as decorously as the circumstances required.

CHAPTER X.

KITTY GALLOWAY MISBEHAVES.

"WE are but worms, after all!" again murmured Mrs. Grimsby Grout, as with closed eyes she reflected upon her proposition.

"Yes, Miss Galloway," said Mrs. MacGorgon, feeling that it was a moment when the opinions of an oracle might be useful to society; "we are all worms. And when we are divested of these outward adornments of wearing of—of necklaces, and braiding the hair,"—Mrs. MacGorgon, it might be observed, wore a very palpable "front" of false hair—"we shall be found to be nothing more than worms! miserable, poor, crawling, loathsome, leprous worms!"

Miss Galloway shuddered visibly; though a severe struggle to smother a rebellious laugh may possibly have had something to do with the

tremulous movement of her plump shoulders. She retained her senses sufficiently to reflect that, for worms of the description spoken of by Mrs. MacGorgon—and not omitting that turbaned lady herself and her swan's-down tippet—the present company of worms were somewhat over-dressed and too convivially disposed. And she further suspected that the Diet of Worms, of which she had heard or read, must have been tea, coffee, toast and tea-cake—drawing her conclusions from the capacity for those refreshments exhibited by the worms then present.

"Yes, Miss Galloway," continued Mrs. Mac Gorgon, but merely using Kitty as a peg on which to hang her address to mankind generally; "these are critical times, even for worms. The reverend gentlemen present will doubtless expound to us what critical times these are."

"Oh! Miss Melladew," said Mrs. Grimsby Grout, parenthetically if not pathetically, "I quite envy your sensations on hearing Mr. Mowle expound for the first time. It is what you will never forget. Really, to listen to him, you know—it is really, you know—as I say—so altogether a—really, isn't it now, Miss Medusa?"

Miss Medusa, being thus appealed to, gushed forth "Ho yes! delicious! so lucid!" Nevertheless, Miss Medusa had an aptitude for slumber whenever Mr. Mowle abandoned his yours-truly attitude to commence his exposition; although she usually contrived to adroitly shade her eyes with a hand-screen. "I quite envy Miss Melladew! I shall never forget my own sensations on first hearing him. You will be charmed!" she added, gushingly, turning to Helen Melladew.

"And yet," whispered Ella Hardy to her companion, "these are the people who have such pronounced opinions on anything that is supposed to approach to idolatrous worship."

Miss Gaunt turned her blue spectacles towards the three young ladies, and said, in a measured tone, that sought to remind the hearer of her Johnsonian connection and literary reputation—

"To expose the fallacies of controversial cavillers, and destroy the baseless theories of dissembling and deluded sophists, is a duty at once so important and onerous as to demand that the best energies of our intellectual powers should be directed by the highest perceptions of our moral faculties. I

should be glad to hear your opinion on this all-absorbing point, Miss Galloway?"

Poor Miss Galloway had not been aware that she was being specially addressed by the literary lady; and as she had lost herself in that lady's flood of syllables, and had not the least idea on what point she was being consulted, she replied, somewhat confusedly—

"I beg your pardon! Indeed, I—I would rather listen to the opinions of—of those who are so much older than myself."

Miss Medusa, on hearing this remark, and considering herself to be a giddy, gushing young thing, thought it good policy to promptly reflect back to Miss Gaunt, Kitty Galloway's observation relative to superiority in age, so that she herself might not therein be included. She therefore at once said—

"A very proper feeling! So, perhaps, Miss Gaunt, you will kindly favour us Young People with your opinion?"

Now Miss Gaunt's published works had been given to the world for so many years, and her "Breathings of an Overcharged Heart" bore upon its title-page so remote a date, that she had been

forced to make a merit of necessity, and own to her probable age. Nevertheless, there was not that difference in years between herself and Miss Medusa which the words of Mrs. MacGorgon's sister were intended to imply. This led her to reply to that lady with some asperity—

"I will do so with cheerful alacrity, Miss Medusa, as of course," she added, with biting sarcasm, as she turned her blue spectacles full upon her, "of course, when you had the privilege of sitting under my late reverend uncle, the Rev. Gorgon Gaunt, you were too young to pay special heed to *his* expositions of the saving change."

The large-hearted Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who was hovering in the near neighbourhood of the group, perceived indications of a slight breeze, and taking alarm thereat, good-naturedly hastened to change the current of conversation.

"Ah, my dear Miss Gaunt! your poor departed uncle! He was indeed a man! Such awakening sermons, and such a respectable congregation—a duke, two earls, and several baronets! Ah! as I say—he really, you know, was such a—ah! he was indeed, Miss Gaunt."

"Miss Medusa may possibly have been too young to remember how greatly he was admired," said Miss Gaunt, still grimly sarcastic.

"No," replied Miss Medusa, with a charming air of girlish candour; "although I must have been quite a child—almost an infant, I may say—yet Mr. Gorgon Gaunt's sermons have their place in my earliest recollections, and I can even now recall to mind how much he was liked."

"Liked!" said Mrs. Grimsby Grout, with an air of correction, as she perceived that her previous interference had not been thoroughly successful in its object, "liked, Miss Medusa!—beloved! idolized!"

"Idolatry again!" whispered Ella Hardy to Helen Melladew.

They were listening to the conversation, scarcely knowing whether they were amused or bored. It was a new scene to Helen Melladew, and in her case the amusement perhaps had the predominance; but to Ella Hardy the novelty of such scenes had long since worn off, and although she accompanied her aunt to them whenever Miss O'Fay wished her to do so, yet it was sadly against

her own private inclinations and promptings. To her, Mr. Mowle, with his yours-truly attitude and courtly manners, was an object of as little interest as Mr. Jones with his unpolished ways and rudely built clothes; and although she did her best to pay heed to the various expositions that she heard on these occasions, her attempts were commonly unsuccessful; and, when she returned home, wearied with an evening that had been intended to do her good, and listened to her aunt's genuine gratitude for what had been said to them, she was almost inclined to envy the little lady for being able to derive so much profit from that which she herself found to be well-nigh valueless.

"Idolized!" said Mrs. Grimsby Grout, in reference to the Rev. Gorgon Gaunt's ministerial popularity. "Slippers worked for him, I should say, for every day in the year, and one extra for leap year. And when it was known that he wanted a new instrument—for your cousins, my dear Miss Gaunt—there were ten grand Broadwoods sent him in the course of the next week. Ah! he was a man indeed to sit under with profit. But he had a thorn in the flesh that always

buffeted him. Bunions, my dear Miss Galloway! bunions!"

And Mrs. Grimsby Grout turned to Kitty Galloway, whose emotions at hearing this were so overpowering that she was compelled to conceal her face with her pocket-handkerchief. But a convulsive movement of her plump shoulders betrayed to her watchful friends the ordeal through which she was passing.

As no one spoke for the next few seconds, Mrs. MacGorgon perceived that she had an opportunity for putting in a word, and bringing back her immediate hearers to a consideration of that subject from which they had wandered. Smoothing her swan's-down tippet, and oracularly nodding her turbaned head, she said—

"We live in critical times! — exceedingly critical!"

She did not address this remark to Miss Galloway, perceiving that her attention was wandering, but threw it out as a general observation to be laid to heart by all.

But Miss Medusa, who had no special interest in her sister's opinions, was beginning to yearn for that period of the evening during which she

could lean back on the soft cushions of the couch, and, shading her eyes with a convenient hand-screen, indulge in forty winks. So she met Mrs. MacGorgon's observation by another remark that was equally general, and which was to the effect (gushingly conveyed) that she did wish that dear Mr. Mowle would begin to expound.

Thereupon Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who had the cares of a hostess upon her head, lowered her voice, and said, confidentially, to Mrs. Mac Gorgon—

"To tell you the truth, I fear that I have made a mistake in asking Mr. Mowle and Mr. Jones on the same evening. I don't know which to ask first to expound. Mr. Jones, you know, is a very distinguished man, had a chapel built for him, and all that; and he calls himself doctor of divinity, though, between ourselves, I don't know where he got his diploma. But then, Mr. Mowle is my own esteemed friend, and belongs to the Establishment; and if I asked Mr. Jones to expound first, Mr. Mowle might be displeased. And if I ask Mr. Mowle to expound first, then Mr. Jones might be jealous, because he is a D.D. What shall I do?"

It was evident that the large-hearted lady was troubled over a matter of precedence.

Mrs. MacGorgon was pleased at being thus consulted, and replied, oracularly—

"First ask Mr. Mowle to expound, and tell Mr. Jones what you are going to do. If Mr. Jones don't like to expound after Mr. Mowle, tell Mr. Jones that his exposition can be dispensed with, and don't invite him again."

And she shook her turbaned head with a Lord Burleigh-like air.

"Well, I hope they won't be offended," said Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who was anxious for a quiet life, and that her party should go off successfully; "but I did all for the best, I am sure; and it is—ah! well—as I say—is it not?"

And she sailed away to another part of the room to discover whether her guests had sufficiently partaken of the repast that she had provided for them, and were prepared for that other repast which was to be supplied by the two reverend gentlemen then present. The Rev. Micaiah Mowle had already laid down his tea-cup, and, therefore, as he lounged gracefully against the chimney-piece, more than ever resem-

bled the yours-truly portrait; but the Rev. Carissimus Jones, D.D., had secured a fresh cup of tea and another buttered tea-cake, and betrayed no signs of being ready for anything else than eating and drinking. Wise in his generation, he knew that the time for his own outpouring was impending; and he therefore continued his inpouring of tea and consumption of tea-cake so long as the opportunity was offered him.

When Mrs. Grimsby Grout sailed away, Mrs. MacGorgon perceived her advantage for making a fresh effort to bring back her immediate hearers to the subject from which they had wandered, and to prepare them for the expositions that were so soon to come; she therefore pointedly addressed herself to Miss Galloway, as the representative of the youth of the company, and said, oracularly—

"We live in very critical times, Miss Galloway—exceedingly critical!"

"Indeed! really!" said Kitty Galloway, who had successfully got over the crisis by the aid of her pocket-handkerchief.

"Times of extremely imminent peril!" said Mrs. MacGorgon, with a threatening shake of

her goat-like tippet and turbaned head, as though she were about to proceed full butt against her argument. "Do you study the apocalyptic warnings, Miss Galloway?"

"No—I really—I am afraid I don't," replied Kitty Galloway; shame and alarm mingling in her answer.

"Then, Miss Galloway," said Mrs. MacGorgon, assuming her oracular air, "you are perhaps not prepared to expect the end of the world in fifteen years from the present time? Fifteen years, Miss Galloway." And Mrs. MacGorgon spoke as though she had received private and reliable information on the point.

"No; I certainly am not," faltered Kitty Galloway, who began to think she ought to be ashamed of her own ignorance.

Mr. Gaunt had heard the words "apocalyptic warnings;" which had immediately brought him to the near neighbourhood of his sister and Mrs. MacGorgon. "Excuse me!" he said to the latter; "fifteen years must be a mistake; for in my little work entitled 'The Coming Struggle,' I have undeniably and satisfactorily proved to the meanest capacity, that 1895 is the true date; and

that is thirty-two years from this date, and not fifteen years. You and I, Mrs. MacGorgon, cannot expect to have our years prolonged to see that day; but it will come to pass, nevertheless."

"But," said Mrs. MacGorgon, who did not approve of her oracle being rejected, "Dr. Humming prophesied that it would be in fifteen years."

"Yes; and took a house on a lease of twenty-five," rejoined Mr. Gaunt. "No, Mrs. MacGorgon! There can be but one solution to this question, and that is the one that I have proved to the world in my 'Coming Struggle.' I do it by decimal fractions. I measure, and open as by a key, the prophetic generations by the decimals and decimal fractions of man's life, each decimal being equal to 365 years of common time. For example: Adam's life of 930 years—365 × 9; and adding the fraction for the 30, is equal to 3394½, measuring to the 4th of Jehoiachim and the fall of the elder Temple, from which are dated the two numbers of 1290 to the setting up of the abomination, and 1260 for its continuing to the opening of the books. But you will see all this very clearly in the tables that are given in my

'Coming Struggle;' and if you will oblige me by accepting and studying the work, you would, I feel sure, be thankful for the perusal of the earnest little publication, and would feel convinced that 1895 is the true date; and that Dr. Humming and all other apocalyptic interpreters have failed to grasp the question. My method of interpretation is simplicity itself; and commends itself to the thoughtful enquirer by its obvious adaptation to the prophetic words." And having said his say, Mr. Gaunt retired to another part of the drawing-room, prepared to enlighten a fresh circle of hearers with his peculiar method of explaining the Apocalypse by the aid of decimal fractions.

"I must present you with a copy of my brother's 'Coming Struggle,' said Miss Gaunt to Kitty Galloway. "You will be pleased with its fruitful expositions and profound reflections. And its leading merit is its extreme simplicity. It is almost simple to a fault. You will read the little work, will you not?"

"Oh, of course! thank you," replied Kitty, with a sense of duty; though she began to wish that she was back again at their lodgings at Pavilion Parade, when she perceived Mrs. Mac-

Gorgon looking fixedly at her, and settling her turbaned head with the evident intention of once more proceeding full butt against her in argument.

"Yes, Miss Galloway," said Mrs. MacGorgon, as though nothing had occurred to interrupt their conversation, "these are indeed very critical times. Are you aware Miss Galloway, that we are now at the feet of clay?"

"My aunt and many others in Brighton 'are at the feet of Clay,'" whispered Ella Hardy to Helen Melladew.

Kitty Galloway did not understand the meaning of Mrs. MacGorgon's words; but imagining from the expression that it must be something dreadful, she said, "Are we indeed! I am sorry to hear it."

Miss Gaunt, anxious to improve the opportunity, turned her blue spectacles on the last speaker, and said, "Yes, Miss Galloway! the miserable vanities of this self-loving world are now drawing to their close."

"Not even youth and beauty will be spared," sighed Miss Medusa, with feeling personality.

"No my dear," said Mrs. Grimsby Grout, who

had just joined them to say that Mr. Mowle was preparing to commence his exposition, "not even dear Mr. Mowle, who, as I say—ah! oh, if we should find ourselves with the goats! Is it not dreadful, my dear Miss Galloway?"

"What—what is dreadful?" gasped Kitty.

"What is dreadful!" echoed Mrs. MacGorgon. "Why these critical times, my dear! these alarmingly critical times; these imminently critical times." And then she added, as though oracularly summing up the state of the case, "My dear Miss Galloway, we are now approaching the seventh Vial."

Poor Kitty could bear it no longer; she had for some minutes been struggling with a variety of conflicting emotions, among which a mad longing to indulge in a hearty laugh had been predominant, and she now broke down and burst into a convulsive fit, which, if it did not commence in hysterics, soon passed into them. Smelling salts and other restorative means were quickly placed at her service; and her mother volunteered apologetic explanations as to her daughter's excitable temperament. So that Kitty Galloway was the cause of what dramatists term "an

impressive *dénouement* and grand tableau" at the termination of the first part of Mrs. Grimsby Grout's entertainment. She did not stay for the remaining part; as her mother considered it prudent for her to retire from the room—a proposition in which the daughter readily acquiesced. But as she left the room she whispered to Ella Hardy and Helen Melladew, "Had you not better get up some hysterics on your own account?"

"I wish we could!" laughed Ella, "especially as imitation is said to be the sincerest flattery."

But as this could not be, they were compelled to remain and listen to the expositions of the Rev. Micaiah Mowle and the Rev. Carissimus Jones; and when they drove back to Cliff Place they were yawning dreadfully.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNDAY IN BRIGHTON.

GILBERT ANSLEY had come to Brighton, had duly brought with him the expected hamper, and had been met by Edgar at the station. Notwithstanding the certain amount of awe that she felt in giving orders to the great-niece of a dean, yet Mrs. Melladew, in handing over to Mrs. Harpeyden the newly arrived game and other contents of the hamper, again had the courage to tell her landlady that she hoped she would put them out of the reach of the cat; and Mrs. Harpeyden received the significant hint concerning that fabulous beast with less vexation, as she called to mind the peculiar way in which her black cat "Smoke" had behaved. Presents of game and fruit and other Melladew productions were sent across to

Miss O'Fay, and also to the Misses Ansley in Rock Gardens; and much interchange of civilities followed the presents.

Of course Gilbert Ansley called on Mrs. Melladew on the morning after Mrs. Grimsby Grout's entertainment, and told them what little home news there was to tell. Mr. Pordage had got pretty well again; the threatened attack of gout had passed away; and the only trace of his croquet accident was in a slight lameness, which somewhat impeded him in his pedestrian undertakings. But he had resumed his walks and his dumb-bell practice; and his curate was enabled to set out for his holiday, leaving his rector in sole charge and in tolerably full vigour. So Gilbert Ansley took his holiday like a man who was determined to enjoy it and to make the most of it; and if he was very much with the Melladews, it was nothing more than was perfectly natural under the circumstances of their relative positions in their own Hopshire parish.

"So that's your young man, is it, Nellie?" said Miss Kitty Galloway, when they were refreshing themselves, after bathing, with some of the good things in Mutton's shop, and there met with

Mr. Ansley and his sister and aunt. "That's your young man, my dear?"

"Now Kitty, don't talk nonsense, but try one of these lemon cheesecakes," said Helen, eating away at one herself.

"Your blushes are quite becoming," said Kitty. "He would have admired them, I'm sure. He did not seem to fancy his old aunt trotting him off and destroying your *tête-à-tête*, did he?"

"How can I know?" laughed Helen. "Here comes Ella on her way from Mattins."

"And is again witness to my preference for Mutton's," said Kitty, as she opened the shop-door and dragged Ella Hardy inside, whispering to her as she did so, "You are just too late to see Nellie's young man."

This led to expostulation as well as explanation, Helen contending that Kitty's fancy had caused her to imagine very strange things, and that Ella must on no account attach the slightest importance to her statements. But Kitty persisted that it did not take a very sharp pair of eyes to see through a millstone, and that if Nellie's young man did not come up to the scratch, it would not be from Nellie hating him. Ella Hardy often

thought of this in after days, and remembered that she had been first told about it in Mutton's as she returned from Mattins.

Besides going to Mutton's and Mattins, the various characters in this story took their rides and drives, and bathings and strolls, and promenades and shoppings during the next few days, and passed the time in much the same fashion that the generality of Brighton visitors employed their hours. Edgar had not yet gone back for any shooting, and did not seem disposed to do so. He had come to the conclusion that the gamekeeper had better kill a sufficiency of game for their supply while at Brighton, and that he himself would reserve his shooting until they had all returned to Melladew. For the present he had fairer game in view, and had found Brighton to possess for him peculiar attractions that it had never before displayed. But then it was undoubtedly a most improving place.

The Melladews had now passed their second Sunday in Brighton, and were therefore enabled to note the shades of difference that its day of rest presented to the week-day brilliance of the queen of British watering-places. They soon

discovered that the Sunday at Brighton was anything but a day of Sabbath rest and holy peace, with nothing more noisy than the jangle of the bells as they called the worshippers to their various places of prayer; for they found the Sunday at Brighton to be a day to which pious George Herbert could never have applied the epithet "most calm." Instead of being most calm, it was most noisy and rackety. Thirty-six London trains, with their tempting inducement of ten or twelve hours at the sea-side, for 3*s.* 6*d.* to Brighton and back, conveyed to the neighbourhood of the King's Road and the Marine Parade many thousands of cockney tourists to swell the week-day population of the place. South-Coast trains also brought in their full quota of visitors for the day, with return tickets and beer-bottles in their pockets; and the Jewish race, equally unfettered by Sabbatismal restrictions, exhibited their Mosaic splendour to a greater extent and in far greater numbers than even on other days of the week, which is saying not a little for a town whose ordinary visitors exhibit so large a sprinkling of the aggressive type of Jewish features.

It is true that the nature of the out-door life

of Brighton was changed on the Sunday; for there were no nigger vocalists, no performing birds or monkeys, no bands of music, no torture-grinders, and no howling fish-fags—at any rate, the yells of the prawn-sellers were silenced in the chief thoroughfares and squares. But in all the bye-streets shops were opened, and the dealers in fish, fruit, vegetables, and pastry were driving a good trade. Gin-shops and public-houses were crowded, and from some of the latter flags were exhibited and banners suspended, setting forth in plain letters that there would be the usual Sunday ordinary at that house, "at 1¼ o'clock, price 1*s.* 6*d.* per head." In all these bye-streets and back slums the pothouse windows opened upon scenes of coarse enjoyment, or were tenanted by gentlemen in their shirt-sleeves, with their amiable partners, who had professed to come from London for the calm delights of the sea-side, and were enjoying their Sunday out after their own fashion, with pipes and gin in a frouzy room that looked on a back slum, redolent with a most ancient and fish-like smell. But that smell, and the presence of the undoubted mariner of the deep blue sea in his fisherman's jersey and scarlet cap, conveyed the

assurance to their easily satisfied minds that London town was left behind them for the day, and that the promised hours at the sea-side were being pleasurably got through.

Some thousands of the excursionists had indeed found their way to the beach, and were within actual sight and sound of the waves, and many hundreds of this number were employing such of the bathing-machines and boats whose proprietors did not object to Sunday trading. Of the boat proprietors, in fact, only nine, out of some hundreds, could be found to resist the many inducements that were held out to them to convert the day of rest into a day of work: and a painted board set up on the beach thus proclaimed this fact:—"List of pleasure-boat proprietors who observe the Sabbath. Those boats are not used on the Lord's Day, saving for purposes of necessity, mercy, or piety.—Rt. Whiley, Sl. Akehurst, Rd. Gillam, Jn. Marsh, Ge. Campbell, Jn. Laycock, Ts. Laycock, Js. Rolf, Ts. Dows." All the other proprietors must have been fully engaged, for not only was there quite a fleet of small boats gleaming over the waves like a shoal of fish at play, but the larger sailing vessels were

filled with their forty or fifty passengers, prepared to brave any amount of sea-sickness, and the blue-shirted boatmen were holloaing to fresh comers to step on board the clipper schooner yachts "Skylark" or "Lady Sale," and make up another party for a trip out to sea.

The poor goats were also deprived of their day of rest, for they and their little carriages were in constant request, and were equally popular with the donkeys. The little fisher-boys who performed the duties of the Shoe-Black Brigade found that their cry "Shine yer boots, sir!" was listened to more readily on a Sunday than on week-days; and the other boys, girls, men, and women who sold newspapers, hat-guards, shell boxes, fruit, cakes, gingerbread, lace, flowers, and other miscellaneous articles, threaded their ways upon the crowded beach and did a brisk business among the excursionists. Flags flew from the vessels and the beach; the fishermen's cabins exhibited notices as to tea and refreshments; and instead of offering to supply sea-water as on week-days, they now proffered to supply hot water or boil kettles. Pipes and cigars were everywhere, and the beach was strewn with

al fresco dinner-parties who had brought their own bottles and pork pies. Here and there a travelling preacher sought to collect an audience by singing hymns in a stentorian voice to popular airs, and by denouncing in vigorous language every other pursuit than his own.

The promenade was thronged as on week-days, though its appearance was altered for the worse, ladies for the most part giving place to females, and gentlemen to gents. If the regular visitors to Brighton kept away from the beach, their places were supplied in quantity, if not in quality, by the Sunday excursionists, assisted by the normal population of the place. Private carriages, with the smart powdered footmen and curly-wigged coachmen, were still to be seen here and there on the accustomed drive along the King's Road to Kemp Town—going to church, perhaps—taking an airing, more probably; but they were mixed up everywhere in the throng of flies in which the once-a-week visitors, Messrs. Brown, Jones, Robinson, and Abednego, were disporting themselves and their feminine belongings. The fly-patronisers ate pork-pies as they drove along, sucked oranges, cracked nuts, and

smoked short pipes and cigars; and indeed, to see four be-jewelled Hebrews inside a fly, puffing cigars and driving up and down the King's Road, was one of the familiar Sunday sights of Brighton.

A large proportion of the one hundred boys' schools were also promenaded along the King's Road, carrying their prayer-books in their hands, to show that they were on their way to or from church. As they were all in their Sunday best, and were marched in orderly fashion along the pavement on the town side of the road, it was a good opportunity for the various Dr. Blimbers of the place to advertise their respective establishments and the number of young friends who had been confided to their tutorial care; and to do these Dr. Blimbers justice, they usually found that the shortest way from their school to the church lay along the King's Road or Marine Parade, where their pupils could breathe the sea air and recruit their health.

But if the ordinary visitors to Brighton did not hurry to the beach, but left it to the London excursionists, they thronged, and crowded, and even mobbed the places of worship, in a manner

that was suggestive of places of amusement, and the scenes that are usually witnessed outside the doors of theatres and operas. And, in this particular, the so-called "opera church" of Brighton, the home of mattins, held the first place. Its musical peal of bells in vain summoned to its services the fishermen for whom it was ostensibly built—they were engaged in their daily occupations on the beach below; but, in their stead, a throng of well-dressed people, coming from every fashionable quarter in Brighton, made St. Paul's their centre, and crowded to be present at its "histrionic" services. Nor were the other churches and chapels deserted in favour of St. Paul's. Each had its own peculiar and constant congregation inflated, during each season, to such unwieldy dimensions, that to stand through an entire service was a state of things that a visitor had to expect as a matter of course. An inkling of this may be gathered from listening to a conversation that took place between some of the characters of our story, who had met together, in a morning call, in Mrs. Melladew's drawing-room, on the day succeeding the second Sunday since that lady had taken up her

quarters in Mrs. Harpeyden's house in Cliff Place.

"Helen and Edgar carried me off to the evening service at St. Paul's," said Mrs. Melladew, "and really I never saw anything like it."

"So well done, do you mean," said the elder Miss Ansley, "or so different from the service in other churches?"

"Well, I didn't mean either exactly," replied Mrs. Melladew, "for I referred to the crowd and the crushing, which was even greater than what we had seen at Scarborough parish church. And the way that people walked out of the church when they had heard enough of the music was really disgraceful. Not that I can say that I was at all pleased with the service; and what with the heat and the crowding, and the noise of the music, I came away with a sad headache."

"How beautifully 'Jerusalem the Golden' was sung during the collection after the service," said Helen Melladew to Ella Hardy.

"Yes," she replied, "Mr. Carter uses the 'Hymnal Noted.'"

"The noted Hymnal," said Gilbert Ansley, significantly, with a smile. "But the effect of

the singing was altogether very good and impressive. I think it a great pity that the churchwardens, or some other persons to whom authority has been given, should not be posted in that large porch to maintain a little more decorum. I myself went there last night, but could get no further than the porch, where I stood for the remainder of the service, although not a word of Mr. Carter's sermon reached me. And though I and two or three others used our Prayer-books in following the service, yet the greater portion of the others were either strolling in and out or talking to their companions, and were only roused to anything like attention during the singing."

"It is nicknamed 'the Sunday Opera,' you know," said Miss Galloway.

"So I perceived from a pamphlet that I saw on the subject in a shop window," replied Gilbert Ansley.

"Here it is," said Edgar Melladew, producing it. "It is in prose—severely Protestant and Foskettish. But there is another pamphlet in rhyme, though not in immortal verse, as you may judge from these lines," and he read them from the book, which he picked up from a side table

that was littered with magazines, newspapers, maps, guides, and other books relating to Brighton :—

"Its very num'rous and efficient choir
Is all that man can reasonably desire.
And what is more, St. Paul's may truly boast
A fine-toned organ, in itself a host,
Played, as it *is* played, by a *master hand*,
And, for its size, unequalled in the land.
The choral service is so well performed,
That on each Sabbath night the church is stormed,
And strangers, who can then obtain a seat,
In sacred music may expect a treat."

"But here," continued Edgar, "is another extract from the same book, which I must read to you. The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling, has been surveying the view from the burial-ground of the parish church, from whence he sees many lofty buildings; but, he adds :—

'The most lofty of all, not by height of its walls,
But its pigeon-house roof, was the church called St. Paul's.
Built on what was the site where it once was decreed
Worship should be held of the strange Irvingite creed;
But the forms and the rites of eccentric action
Soon fail'd to afford sufficient attraction;
So the place was shut up, and to ruin soon went,
And thus to the Vicar a fair occasion lent
A poor man's church to build; at least that was his plea,
And to work quick he went as brisk as could be.

Subscriptions poured in, and soon up went the church;
But alas! the poor man was left quite in the lurch,
For so fine was the structure, and the service so grand,
Religion was forms he could not understand;
All its meekness was gone, and a vain pomp and show
Usurp'd the plain path it was of yore wont to go;
And fashion attired in gorgeous array,
A vehicle made it for pompous display.
So after striving in vain to learn what it meant,
He in conscience at last was compelled to dissent.
And a place seek for prayer where pomp scorned to lurk
'Mongst beautified garments and upholstery work.'

"I should hope," said Edgar, as he concluded the extract, "that we are not to accept this as a favourable specimen of the Brighton muse, but only as an indication of the feeling with which St. Paul's and its services are regarded by a certain section of the community.

"They ought to be burnt," said Ella Hardy.

"The people who don't like St. Paul's and mattins?" asked Kitty Galloway.

"No," laughed Ella Hardy, "these two little pamphlets."

"They shall be converted into an *auto-da-fé* this very night," said Edgar. And he turned to his sister and said, "Helen, remind me of it when I light my chamber candlestick—as Mr. Pecksniff said."

CHAPTER XII.

CONVERSATIONS AND ENTERTAINMENTS.

MISS O'FAY, the elder Miss Ansley, and Mrs. Melladew were having a discussion of their own, leaving the younger people to continue their own strain of conversation.

"I was quite unfortunate yesterday," said Gilbert Ansley, "for not only had I to stand all through the evening service at St. Paul's, but in the morning I went with my sister to the parish church; and, after our weary climb up to it, we found that we could not get seats. We tried the southern porch ineffectually, and then went round to the tower, where we stood until after the service commenced, and then came away, as we did not wish to remain standing through the whole service in the midst of a dense crowd. I have paid a week-day visit to the church, in order to look at its restoration; for when I last saw it it was in

its churchwardenized state, with cumbrous galleries, sash-windows, and whitewashed ceilings, and pervaded by a smell that appeared to proceed from the three M's—mice, mildew, and matting. It is a pity that the church is so dark. Carpenter should have contrived to insert some clerestory windows. It was a famous idea of old Mr. Carter's to turn to advantage the popular feeling towards the Duke of Wellington, and to persuade the Brighton people that the best monument to the duke's memory in that town would be the restoration of the parish church in which he had formerly worshipped, when he was a pupil of the vicar of Brighton, Mr. Carter's grandfather. The sum of £5,000, that was at once raised, was sorely needed, and has been well expended; and the cenotaph in the chantry to the duke's memory is a beautiful shrine within a shrine. You should have a look at it, Miss Melladew, and the brass beside it."

"Is it a brass that I could rub for Mr. Pordage?" asked Helen, remembering her promise to their rector.

"No," replied his curate, "there is no old brass in Brighton. The one I spoke of is merely

a modern slab to the memory of Carpenter, the architect, and also the designer of the duke's cenotaph. Then there is Captain Tattersell's tomb, and that to Phœbe Hessel, who served in the army as a private soldier, and was wounded at Fontenoy, and was said to be 108 years old when she died."

"Yes," said Edgar, "and, if we are to believe in centenarians, there is another lying in the same churchyard, Mahomed the Shampooer, whose tombstone claims for him to have lived for 102 years. And there are the tombs of other Brighton celebrities—Martha Gunn and Smoaker Miles, for example; only we can't get at them for the railings."

"Then I am afraid, Miss Ansley," said Kitty Galloway, "that as you left the parish church, you did not go to church at all yesterday morning."

"Oh yes, we did," she replied, "for we at once went on to another church, not far off, where we got seats—or rather chairs, for there were no pews or open seats, but rows of rush chairs, like those one sees in continental churches."

"And at the Crystal Palace," interpolated

Kitty Galloway. "It was St. Michael's, a very lofty church—literally a high church. The first time that I went to see it I said to a lady, who was going up the flight of steps to the porch, 'What church is this?' She misunderstood my question, and replied, 'The Catholic church.' 'Oh!' I said, 'I thought'—and then she interrupted me, by saying 'It is the English Catholics', not the Roman Catholics'—you understand.' 'I understand perfectly,' I replied. And I thought to myself, perhaps it is a distinction without a difference. They try to rival St. Paul's, but they can't manage it as yet, although they make a good attempt."

"The musical part of the service," said Miss Ansley, "although it seemed to me to be very well and correctly done, was certainly not so showy and attractive as that which we heard at St. Paul's in the evening."

"There is a fine organ at St. Paul's," explained Ella Hardy, "and only a small harmonium at St. Michael's. They want funds for an organ, and also for open seats in the nave. Were you pleased with St. Michael's, Miss Ansley —I mean as a building?"

"Not very much; it seemed such a strange mixture of marble and brick."

"My sister," said Gilbert Ansley, "was scarcely prepared to see the black and red brick of the exterior reproduced in the interior, with a thorough absence of plaster and sham that would charm Ruskin. But the coloured bricks make the white bands of stone and the white stone arches all the more effective, and contrast with the dark marbles and alabaster in the pulpit, font, the pillars of the chancel-arch, and the dwarf parclose, which is quite a feature in the church and enables the chancel to be fully seen. Overhead is a tall metal cross, with gilt stars of glory, which seemed to me as though they were arranged to be lighted with gas. We were also struck by the way in which the bell for service was tolled by a surpliced lad, who stood in the midst of the chancel, facing the altar, and pulled the rope that passed upwards to the slender spirelet that occupies the position of the sanctus bell-cot that is occasionally found in old churches."

"And one of the clergy," said Miss Ansley, "when he was intoning the prayers, faced round to the congregation, and placing his elbows

against his sides, sent out his hands horizontally in a very peculiar way."

"The absence of windows in the north and south walls of the aisles," said Gilbert Ansley, "gives another peculiarity to the church, which to me is not pleasing. In fact, I don't much admire the Byzantine style; but I suppose Butterfield designed it according to instructions, and that it was wished to make St. Michael's unlike any other church in Brighton. The general effect of the alabaster reredos, in shape like the gable of a house, is to my mind very unsatisfactory. The vested altar and the two tall candlesticks, and the super-altar, with its cross, candlesticks, and pots of flowers, do not make so much show as they do at St. Paul's; but I believe that on special occasions St. Michael's quite rivals, if it does not outdo, St. Paul's in the elaborate nature of its floral and other decorations."

"You will be able to judge of that on this day week, Holy Cross day," said Ella Hardy. And then she and Gilbert Ansley engaged in a conversation on the floral decoration of churches. Edgar Melladew was talking to Kitty Galloway on

a far different subject, for he was endeavouring to persuade her to make up a party to go to the theatre and see Pepper's Ghost, which was the novelty of the day, and was to be seen at the little poky Brighton theatre, in an ultra-melodramatic piece, specially written to introduce its thrilling effects. An opposition ghost was also on view at the Newburgh Rooms, for the benefit of people like Miss O'Fay, who would desire to see it, but would object to be present in a theatre at a theatrical representation.

Miss O'Fay, for her part, was holding forth to Mrs. Melladew and the elder Miss Ansley on her favourite theme, the "evangelical" clergy. And Ella Hardy, as she talked with Gilbert Ansley, and heard the words, "We went to hear Mr. Sands—a most acceptable preacher—pure gospel," remarked, with a smile, "Hear Mr. Sands! Exactly—not the church service, not the liturgy, but the popular preacher."

"I fear that is human nature," said Gilbert Ansley, "and that in this matter I cannot come into court with clean hands. For I confess to hankering after popular preachers, though in a great measure when I lapse into that irregularity

I do so for my own professional good, in order that if possible I may be enabled to gain some valuable hints for my own improvement in the pulpit. When a clergyman only hears his own voice in the pulpit, he is in danger of not being likely to rid himself of any little defects or mannerisms with which he may have encumbered his style of delivery, and which may be detrimental to his efficiency; but by hearing other preachers he is often made sensible of his own deficiencies, and can see how to improve them. I must acknowledge that it was quite a delight to me yesterday to rove from church to church, and note the various shades of excellence in each preacher; and though I did not altogether go to church for the precise purpose of hearing Mr. So-and-so, yet the hearing of him will be one of the points in the service which will be the most prominent when I take a retrospect of my Sunday holidays."

"Gilbert was quite a rover yesterday," said his sister; "and in the afternoon, under pretence of a walk, carried me right away to the other end of Brighton—all the way from Rock Gardens to Hove."

"Was that to hear a popular preacher?" asked Ella Hardy.

"Not altogether," replied Gilbert Ansley, "for I really wished my sister to have a walk. But we were exceedingly pleased with St. John Baptist's church, although its black rubble and white stone dressings give its exterior that gloomy, magpie look that is to be seen in other Brighton churches than St. Paul's. But inside the church is exceedingly light and cheerful, although I thought its aisles too low, its elaborately carved bosses too big and pretentious, and its proportions not altogether satisfactory. Its transept gives it a very marked character, with its baptistery at the east end of the south aisle, and the similar area on the northern side occupied by the vestry and organ. The double-fronted organ, by the way, has most elaborately painted pipes and was capitally played; and the colours on the organ were continued in the stained glass of the very effective east window and in the west and clerestory windows. The brass standards are also good, and so is the stone screen underneath the organ. Of course there is an unfinished tower, as at St. Paul's and St. James's; for it seems good

policy not to complete a tower. If you do so, you as good as say that you do not want any more funds; but so long as you leave the tower unfinished you can always appeal to the munificence of your congregation."

"If ever you build a church, Mr. Melladew," said Kitty Galloway, "I hope that you won't fill the windows with greenish and buff-coloured glass, as Dr. O'Lion has done at St. James's; for it is dreadful for the ladies' complexions."

Miss O'Fay had risen to take her leave, and the morning callers dispersed, some to walk and others to drive up and down from Adelaide Crescent to Kemp Town, in the never-ending still-beginning style of Brighton visitors in the afternoons of the season. They were enough in number and on sufficiently friendly terms to form pleasant parties, and to make the days pass very agreeably. They were sufficiently various too in their tastes to enable them to diversify their proceedings without allowing their Brighton life to become monotonous; and the gay cheerfulness and brilliance of the out-door scenes that met their eyes whenever they moved abroad kept them, as Kitty Galloway observed, "up to concert pitch,

and never allowed them to be moped or bored." Miss Galloway had a horror of being moped, and to her a fit of the blues would have seemed almost as dreadful as a fit of the gout would have been to her father, the major, in the midst of the grouse season. As for Edgar Melladew and his shooting, he had allowed the subject to die a natural death; and there seemed every prospect of the partridges at Melladew doing the same, so far as his gun was concerned. He still continued to find his own game in Brighton, and was content to let his keeper send them the birds and hares that were required for their own and their friends' consumption.

So their Brighton life passed away very smoothly and pleasantly. They went to Mattins; they still oftener went to Mutton's. They rode, they drove, they walked, they bathed. Not contented with the sea, both ladies and gentlemen patronised Brill's Baths in the various portions of that Brighton establishment that are specially set apart for the two sexes. They had dinner parties, and evening parties, and musical parties. They saw Pepper's Ghost at the theatre and Newburgh Rooms. They saw Woodin at the Town Hall,

and the German Reeds and John Parry at the Pavilion. They enjoyed and appreciated Leech's Brighton sketches, then appearing in *Punch*, more especially those that related to the nuisance of the fish-fags and prawn-sellers; and Kitty Gallowdy promenaded Lansdowne Place, with the hope of setting eyes on the inimitable artist, with a persevering persistency that, if he had known it, would have filled his modest and retiring nature with alarm. She was partially consoled, however, by meeting the editor of *Punch* on the Esplanade one day that she was returning to Pavilion Place from calling on the Ansleys in Rock Gardens; and in honour of the event she at once went to Trussell's delightful shop in East Street, to purchase Mr. Mark Lemon's portrait for her *carte-de-visite* book of celebrities, to which some of the Brighton clergy were already admitted, in close company with Stella Colas, Lydia Thompson, Buckstone, Grisi and Mario, and various theatrical favourites.

To the Pavilion Flower-show all went, as a matter of course; for that was neutral ground, midway between Mutton's and Mattins, and could be trod by high and low alike without loss of caste.

The Grimsby Grouts were there, and Mrs. Mac Gorgon, with her sister Miss Medusa, and Mr. Gaunt and his sister, and nearly all the people whom the Melladews had met during their stay in Brighton. And if anything were needed to justify Edgar's high opinion of the Pavilion buildings and grounds, it would have been found on the Flower-show days, in the suitableness of the place, both indoors and out, for such a purpose and such a gay assemblage. The scarlet and gold uniforms of the Guards' band stationed on the lawn, the centre of a sweeping range of tents, formed one great bed of brilliant colours, whose gaiety and brightness were repeated all around in blooming flowers, blooming women, and blooming dresses. Like the flowers exhibited, all looked their best and smartest, and the pinks of fashion were to be found in greater numbers among the promenaders than in the show-glasses on the stands and tables. Everything was gay and glittering, and the Pavilion and its gardens were to be seen at their best.

"Though they will be better still, this time next year," said Edgar to Miss O'Fay and Ella Hardy, as they walked from the music-room to

the banqueting rooms, and there stayed to have a careful look at the flowers and fruit decorations for the dinner-table. "When the re-embellishment of these rooms is completed, the Pavilion will be more magnificent than even in the days of Gorgeous; and Brighton will then be able to boast of the most fantastically splendid Palace in the world, into which the many-headed mob have permission to enter."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs Melladew; "but I wish they would make the doorways wider. They are like turnstiles." The worthy lady was somewhat ruffled; for she was attired in her most elaborate and voluminous robes, and had been so squeezed by the crowd as she passed from the drawing-room into the saloon, that her new watered poplin, she felt sure, was dreadfully crushed and creased.

"Well, mother," said her son, "I think you have hit almost the only blot in the Pavilion as a building for the public use. But I suppose that George the Fourth and his architect did not anticipate the reign of crinoline."

Little Miss O'Fay thought of her own slender costume when she was whirled round the ad-

joining room on his Royal Highness's arm to the music of *Lieber Augustin.* How far away were those days! but she could still see the features of handsome Captain Hardy in those of her beautiful niece; and she repressed a rising sigh, as she thought within herself, "She is yet spared to me. I have much to be grateful for."

Among many matters that greatly interested Miss O'Fay during her stay in Brighton, were those on which her favourite Incumbent of St. Margaret's Chapel had devoted so much energy, and spent so much time and money. And one day she pioneered her friends the Melladews to that portion of the beach, near to the Old Ship, where lies the Fishermen's quarter, and where the roadway is carried over various arches that are put to as various uses. But it was to the two arches numbered 44 and 45 that the little lady conducted her friends, who found the latter arch fitted up as a small chapel for "Missions to Seamen. Rev. ——— ———, Hon Chaplain. Services held Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, at 7½ P.M.," and the former arch arranged with benches and tables for a "Sailors and Fishermen's Home Reading Room." Here

they found Robert Whyley, the superintendent, who told them all that they wished to know concerning the institution and its members.

He received (he said) ten shillings a week for keeping things in order, and had to be there daily from ten o'clock till nine, the hours during which the room was kept open. To the reading-room there was a subscription of one penny a week; but only about thirty subscribed during the summer, which was the boatmen's harvest season. But with October commenced the coffee season, which continued up to March, when coffee is gratuitously distributed to the subscribers, the cost being paid by the subscriptions of friends of the institution. This induced men to join; though it would perhaps be better if the men were made to pay for the coffee, even if it was only a farthing a cup. On Saturday nights, the men subscribe among themselves for a "boil" of tea or coffee, which they take in the arch wherein the service is held. They are cramped for room in these arches, as some men are smoking and drinking coffee and talking, while others are reading; and it would be desirable if the talkers and readers could occupy separate arches. Be-

sides the services, instructive lectures are given to the men, of which those on Natural History, by Mr. Jesse, of Brighton, have been published. Pictures adorn the walls of the room; there is a well-selected though small library; and on the walls of the "chapel" are texts against sabbath-breaking, selected by the boatmen themselves, nine of whom, as we have already seen, do not follow their occupation on Sundays. They have also a Penny Bank; and Miss O'Fay was told that, in the year ending with that summer of '63, upwards of four hundred pounds had been deposited by the fishermen—money, said her informant, that would most probably have been spent in drink.

"I am not quite so sure that all of it would have gone in drink," said Edgar; "though I dare say a great portion would have done so. As I felt an interest in this matter"—Miss O'Fay looked pleased—"I have conversed lately with several fishermen on the subject; and though of course I do not implicitly believe all that each one of them tells me, yet I do give credence to a part. One fisherman, with whom I was talking on this coffee question and the closing of the room at nine in the evening, said to me, 'I wish

the good people would pay a person in the herring and chief fishing season, when we catch sole and skate mostly, to provide us at the Home or one of those arches with hot coffee. We should be glad to buy it; and though I am not a teetotaller, not a bit of it,' said the man heartily, 'yet I mean to say this, that when a man comes to land half drowned and tired after two or three hours' fishing out in the dark and the rain, there's nothing'll put him right so soon as a pint of hot coffee. Beer's not of much account, and sperrits is no better. Hot coffee's the thing! But now,' said he, 'if a fisherman wants to get it he has to go home for it, and turn in for an hour or two for a sleep; and, by the time he's on the beach again, maybe he's lost his chance for another haul. But, if he could get hot coffee down on the beach, in one of those arches, just when he wants it, you may depend upon it, sir, he'd get it in preference to beer and sperrits.' Now," said Edgar, "that is precisely what this Brighton fisherman said to me; and I think that there is something valuable in his suggestion."

Mrs. Melladew was so much interested in this Seamen's Home, that she arranged to go with

Miss O'Fay and her niece to one of the evening services in the 45 Arch; the Superintendent assuring them that they would be welcomed, and would not be depriving any fishermen of the room, as, just at that season, there was a smaller attendance. So they went on the Tuesday evening, in the week after the Flower-show, leaving Helen Melladew at home, as she wished to write some letters for which she had not found time during the day.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DREADFUL INTRUDER.

HELEN MELLADEW was quite alone in the drawing-room at Cliff Place; for Edgar had also gone out—not with his mother, though; and she had barely established herself at a writing-table, when there came a tap at the drawing-room door. "Come in," said Helen, thinking to see Pettifer, or Mrs. Harpeyden's maid, with letters or a parcel.

The door was partially opened, and through the aperture was protruded a head, the eyes in which took a careful survey of the room. It was neither the head of Pettifer nor of Mrs. Harpeyden's maid, but that of a man, whose red cheeks, grog-blossomed nose, and generally vinous appearance, betokened a too familiar acquaintance with the use of ardent spirits.

"Mum's the word!" said the individual to

whom this head belonged, as he laid his forefinger on the side of his grog-blossomed nose, and assumed a peculiarly waggish expression of countenance. His forefinger and hand were excessively dirty, as though he had been black-leading them; and, contrasting with his roseate face, made him, so far as colour went, a specimen of *rouge et noir*. "Mum's the word!" said this individual again, as he stepped lightly into the room, and quickly and carefully shut-to the door. His clothes, from their cut, may once have been the pink of fashion; but, if so, the pink had long since run to seed, and their wearer now presented an excessively shabby-genteel appearance.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" cried Helen hastily, in some alarm; "you must have mistaken the room."

"No mistake at all, Miss Melladew," answered the intruder, with a hiccup. "There is no cause for the slightest *hic*-alarm; John is the soul of honour." He hiccuped again as he said "honour," winked at Helen with a watery eye, and lurching to the door planted his back against it, while he produced from the pockets of his tail-coat a pair of lady's boots. "These are your boots, Miss

Melladew," said this inebriated individual, "which I've pol-*hic*-hished to that extent that you might see to sh-*hic*-shave in them, like the cat in Warren's pi-*hic*-ture; only you don't sh-*hic*-have that pretty face of yours; that's where it is you know-*hic*. Ah! they're boots and no mistake! what a lovely *hic*-foot, ain't it?" He was apostrophizing one of the boots as he held it out at arm's length, while he propped himself against the door.

"Put them down and leave the room directly," said Helen, with spirit, as she recognized her own boots and concluded that this was the man who might be employed by the landlady to clean boots and knives. He spoke, however, like a tolerably well educated man, although a decidedly dissipated one.

"Ah, Miss Melladew," he said, with another wink of his watery eye, and an expression that was evidently intended to be pathetic and sentimental, but was ludicrously comic, if Helen had seen it upon any other boards than those of her private drawing-room, "you little know the *hic* rapture that it gives me to *hic*-polish these little bootsy wootsies, *hic*."—He here made a lurch that

carried him from the door and obliged him to support himself by holding on to the chiffonier. As he did so he corrected himself by saying, "Steady John! steady my *hic*-boy! in the presence of lovely woman." And he then continued his personal address to Helen: "I worship the very *hic*-ground that these little bootsy-*hic*-wootsies tread upon." Saying which he pressed them to his lips.

"Leave the room, you impertinent person, or I will ring the bell for assistance," said Helen; who, however, now felt almost too frightened to move from her position and take the walk that divided her from the bell-rope. Her retreat by way of the door was already cut off by the intruder's position.

"Oh no you won't!" said the dreadful man, with a leer, as he made a sudden dash across the room, and supported himself against the back of an easy-chair that was nearest to the bell-rope. "You must walk over my cor-*hic*-orpse first! I have admired you long in *hic*-secret, Miss Melladew; and now the *hic*-truth must come out. I love you to dis-*hic*-traction! 'pon my word I do! Oh yes! *hic*-John's the soul of honour, though

he's down in the *hic*-world. But I've seen better days, and I can make you a good *hic*-husband."

"Leave the room!" cried Helen, but almost too frightened either to speak or stir, while the dreadful man leant over the back of the easy-chair and gazed at her with drunken admiration.

"Oh! it's quite true I as-*hic*-sure you!" he hiccuped. "Only say the *hic*-word, and name the *hic*-happy day, my pretty Jane." Here he varied his address by a snatch from the popular ballad; "ah, wherefore look so sh-*hic*-shy, but meet, oh meet me in the *hic*-corn-field, and we'll be off to Gretna Gr-*hic*-green, or anywhere else you please. Oh yes! John is the soul of *hic*-honour, and will ride outside on the *hic*-box all the way, till after the blacksmith has *hic*-performed the ceremony."

He thrust out a black hand, in which was one of her boots, and stepped forward. Helen Melladew was cut off from the bell-rope and from the door; and was considering whether she should scream for assistance, or should rush into the balcony and there imitate Rebecca in "Ivanhoe," when the dreadful man stopped short in his pro-

gress, and either from design or from his infirmity went down upon his knees.

If it arose from the latter cause, he skilfully availed himself of his position; for, dropping the boots and clasping together his black hands with the air of an impassioned lover, he hiccuped "Oh say this word, the little *hic*-word my pretty Jane; and you'll make me the *hic*-happiest of men."

Helen had risen from her seat in the greatest alarm; but she now saw her chance of escape, and rushed round the table to the door, at which at that moment came a tap, immediately followed by the opening of the door and the appearance of Mrs. Harpeyden. Never before had the form of the great-niece of the Dean of St. Vitus appeared so acceptable to her lodger.

"Oh, my dear young lady!" said Mrs. Harpeyden, "my dear young lady; it is as I feared. How can you forgive me? He escaped my watchfulness, although it was only for a few moments."

"Who is he?" asked Helen, beginning to think that perhaps the intruder was a lunatic.

"He is my brother. Alas! that I should say it," groaned Mrs. Harpeyden, "but he has been a dreadful trouble to me for many years."

During this short space, the "soul of honour" had risen from his knees by the aid of the easy-chair, and was telegraphing to Helen that she was not to believe a word that his sister was saying to her; but the landlady turning round, and catching him in the fact, without more ado made a sudden pounce upon him and caught him by the collar of his coat, saying as she did so, "Oh, you ungrateful creature! was it for this that I took compassion upon you, and gave you bed and board when no one else would offer you a home? I can't think where you get the drink from."

"Mum's the word, sister," hiccuped the "soul of honour." "I am indebted to a *hic*-friend—and you wouldn't have me betray a *hic*-friend, would you now? Hands off! and I'll *hic*-come like a lamb."

"Then come at once," said Mrs. Harpeyden, as she let go her hold on his coat collar. "Oh, Miss Melladew! you don't know what it is to be afflicted with a drunken brother. Now, John! come this instant."

He obeyed her; but as he did so he turned to Helen, and placing a black finger to his grog-blossomed nose said, with a wink of his watery eye,

"Mum's the word! Gretna—any day that is *hic* convenient. John is the soul of *hic*-honour, and will ride on the box till after the *hic*-ceremony." More he might have said, had not a sudden lurch, assisted by a vigorous pull from Mrs. Harpeyden, shot him through the door.

In a few minutes the landlady returned to the drawing-room, sobbing in great distress. "Oh, Miss Melladew! my dear young lady! whatever will you think of this!"

"Think, Mrs. Harpeyden! that you are greatly to be pitied," replied Helen.

"Oh, it is most kind of you to say so," said the weeping landlady; "like your own noble nature; especially when you have been so insulted. Oh, you cannot tell the trouble that he has been to me."

"You had better sit down, Mrs. Harpeyden," said Helen, thinking that her evening's letter-writing was not progressing very favourably, but yet feeling sorry for her landlady, and desirous to show her some little sympathy. "Is he your only brother?"

"Yes, Miss Melladew," replied Mrs. Harpeyden, checking her sobs. "Poor John is my

only brother. My dear departed father, Mr. Myth—the son of that Rev. Mr. Myth who was Rector of Squashton-in-the-Thistles, Clayshire, and who had been presented to his living by his cousin the Archdeacon of Blankton"—(even in her distress, the landlady was unable to resist the opportunity of airing her pedigree); "my dear departed father would have brought him up to his own profession as a lawyer; but poor John insisted upon being a surgeon; and he was allowed to have his own way, being an only son and thought much of; and he was educated for the medical profession, and ought at this time to be doing well, and to be a respectable member of society and a comfort to me. But poor John was always addicted to low company; and they encouraged his tendency to drink, and he never would properly devote himself to his profession, but either from carelessness, or from being intoxicated, was constantly making mistakes in the drugs; so that he was of no use to his employer, even as a dispenser, nor to any one else, indeed, although he has been assistant to several druggists. But he was always blundering over the medicines, or doing something wrong, that occasioned his

discharge; and after my dear father's death poor John went on from bad to worse, until none would give him employment; and as he has no home to go to, he is continually coming to me. And what can a sister do, Miss Melladew, but take pity on her only brother? And poor John has many good qualities when he is in his sober senses and can be kept away from drink."

"You must have had much trouble with him," said Helen.

"Trouble! oh, Miss Melladew!" said Mrs. Harpeyden, with a groan that conveyed volumes of information, "sometimes I have paid for him to have lodgings elsewhere; but he always came back to me in a terrible condition, and dreadfully in debt. So I have occasionally allowed him to live with me in this house, where I have more control over him, and have a chance of keeping him respectable and sober. And he makes himself very useful to me in many ways; for poor John can turn his hand to almost anything, except his own profession."

"Was he here when we first came?" asked Helen.

"No, Miss Melladew," replied the landlady;

"he has only been with me for the last ten days, and he has made himself very useful, and kept quiet all the time. He went out this afternoon on some errands, and stayed away a long time; and I am afraid that he must have persuaded some one to treat him to spirits or liquor of some kind; for I am sure that he had no money of his own to spend. And as I saw when he returned that he was the worse for liquor, I kept him quite safely downstairs—as I am sorry to say I have often been obliged to do—for fear he should disturb any of the lodgers. For I must say this for poor John, that even in liquor he is sensible of my interests, and never sings or shouts, or does anything to attract attention from my parlours and drawing-rooms, but keeps quietly below in the basement, to his own little room."

"I have certainly never heard him till this evening," said Helen, "and did not in fact know that there was such a person in the house."

"No, Miss Melladew; and you might never have known it if he had not unfortunately escaped my watchfulness this evening," said Mrs. Harpeyden; "for poor John is as quiet as a mouse, even when in liquor, having that eye to my

interests; and as long as he has boots given him to black, he makes himself quite happy in his own way, poor fellow. Well, Miss Melladew, seeing that poor John was the worse for liquor, I had put him into his room and given him all the boots and shoes that I could find, including your pair of strong walking boots; and he kept himself very quiet and contented, blacking and polishing them over and over again. For when he has polished them once, he blacks them again, and then polishes them afresh; and so on until he gets tired and drops off to sleep; and then I am obliged to put him to bed, where he rests comfortably till morning, and then wakes up quite sober and penitent. I had fancied that he had dropped off to sleep; and I had gone to the larder to see that what remained from your dinner was put safely away, out of reach of the cat, when I suppose poor John must have watched me and have crept softly upstairs. When I got back to his room and found it empty I was dreadfully alarmed; for I at once feared that he had intruded on the parlours or drawing-rooms; and I cannot describe, my dear young lady, what my feelings were when I heard his voice in this room, and

made bold to enter. Not that poor John would have done you the slightest hurt; but of course you would feel great alarm."

"I certainly did," said Helen; "but my trouble was only for a few minutes, and yours must be continuous. I am very sorry for you, Mrs. Harpeyden; so sorry that I shall not say a word about this either to mamma or my brother. So you need not fear that it will make any difference to you in our leaving the lodgings."

Mrs. Harpeyden was affected to tears. That poor John's intrusion upon the young lady would lead to the loss of her "drawing-rooms"—as she professionally termed the Melladews—was the very result that she had been anticipating. Her thanks, therefore, were as sincere as they were profuse. She promised that Miss Melladew should not be annoyed by any repetition of her brother's offence, as she would the next morning remove poor John to the house of an old servant who had married and settled in Brighton, and to whose superintending care the "soul of honour" was occasionally confided.

"I am not ignorant of the feelings of gentility," said the landlady; "for although by the dispen-

sation of Providence I am reduced to let lodgings, yet I cannot forget that I am a Myth, and the great-niece of that eminent theologian who was the Dean of St. Vitus."

"Poor Mrs. Harpeyden!" thought Helen, as she turned to her writing-table to endeavour to make up for lost time by a rapid use of her pen; "what a dreadful *bête-noire* that wretched brother must be. No wonder that she should be disposed to look sharply after extras, when she has that terrible person to support."

And true to her promise, she never mentioned to her mother or brother that her letter-writing that evening had in any way been disturbed, or that she had received an offer of marriage from a professional gentleman who claimed to be the "soul of honour."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PICNIC AT THE DYKE.

ALTHOUGH Helen Melladew and her brother, in company with Ella Hardy, Gilbert Ansley, Kitty Galloway, and her two brothers, had made a riding party to the Dyke, Mrs. Melladew and the two Misses Ansley had not yet seen it. They had therefore arranged another party, in which, as the younger Miss Ansley did not ride, Mrs. Melladew, Miss O'Fay, and the two Misses Ansley should take a carriage, while the others rode. Weather permitting, the party was planned for the Wednesday in the week after the Flower Show, and the day succeeding that evening on which Helen had received proposals from the "soul of honour," and on which her mother had gone with Miss O'Fay and Ella Hardy to the service at the Seamen's Home.

It was arranged that the party should meet at

the Dyke House for a sort of picnic dinner, and should return to Brighton for a five o'clock cup of tea, in order that they might be able to go to the Pavilion at six o'clock, there to be present at the distribution of prizes to the Middle-Class Schools, at which the Bishop of Oxford was to speak. This was an expected treat, to which all were more or less looking forward, and which Ella Hardy was particularly desirous not to miss.

The day proved fine, and by noon a fly and pair and four saddle-horses were in readiness at 105, Cliff Place, from whence the Ansleys and Miss O'Fay were to start. Ella Hardy appeared, ready habited, at the steps of No. 52, and, assisted by Edgar, was the first in the saddle. Helen soon joined her; the other four ladies took their seats in the fly; the two gentlemen mounted their horses; and they clattered away up Cliff Place, and past the Wick and Montpelier Crescent, to the Henfield Road, where Kitty Galloway and her two brothers were lying in wait to join them. They had a famous gallop over the springy turf of the Downs, startling those "English ortolans," the wheatears, which still flourish there, despite the shepherds and bird-catchers with their T traps

and horsehair nooses. The flocks of sheep—the veritable southdowns, and, as Edgar said, "the true and original muttons,"—were too much accustomed to the daily charges of cavalry to be much disturbed from their peaceful nibblings of the thymy grass, and they went steadily on cropping their patches of ground among the tufts of heather and wild flowers, while their bells made a tinkling music that sounded like distant chimes whose melody was fitfully borne upon the breeze. But this was not the only music to break the silence; for laughter and girlish voices, still more musical, marked the course of the merry party as they cantered away over the Downs; and, rounding the end of the great dyke cutting, drew rein as they passed up the ascent, and by the signboard swinging from its gallows, and by the inn stabling, to the small one-story place of entertainment known as the Dyke House.

Several other parties were already there, having come on foot, on horseback, and in various conveyances, from the private carriage and the Brighton fly to the public coach and waggonette; so the party, headed by Edgar Melladew, alighted in the stable-yard, and then waited near to the

small enclosed porch until the carriage with the other four ladies had arrived. The first thing that morning, as soon as it seemed probable that the day would be fine, Edgar had sent over a messenger to the Dyke House to secure a room in which they could peaceably enjoy their picnic dinner, as in so public a place, the resort of so many and various visitors, they had all voted that the customary *al-fresco* repast—or "Nebuchadnezzar feed upon the grass," as Frederick Galloway termed it—should in the present instance give place to a luncheon within doors. Edgar had directed the landlord to supply certain things, and a well-stocked hamper from Mutton's set aside any fears that might have arisen from the lack of due provisions.

The landlord, who was very lame, but very civil and obliging, took them along the narrow passage of his little inn, and opening a door to the left, opposite to his bar, showed them to the room that had been set apart for their entertainment, and where the table was already laid for their luncheon. The hamper from Mutton's had been brought in the fly, so that the unpacking of this, and the transference of its contents to the

table, and their due arrangement thereupon, helped to sustain the idea of a picnic, and gave employment to what, in theatrical language, would be called "the united strength of the company." Frederick Galloway made himself particularly busy in assisting Helen Melladew in every possible way, and in keeping as near to her as the various circumstances of riding, walking, or dining would permit, for his sister had let fall some expressions that made him suspect that his adorable Helen was smitten, not with him, but with Gilbert Ansley, and he was valiantly determined "to cut out that parson." As Gilbert Ansley and Helen Melladew were entirely in the dark as to his intentions, this cutting-out prospect was hidden from them, and did not in any way interfere with their mutual enjoyment on that day.

The room was by no means large for their party of eleven, but as three of the ladies were in riding-habits, and as Miss O'Fay was equally destitute of crinoline, they were the better enabled to accommodate themselves to the restricted dimensions of the apartment; and, if they were compelled to sit in very near neighbour-

hood, there were at least some among the party who did not look upon this as a hardship. The room had but one window, which was in the wall opposite to the door, and the panes of which were all scratched over with names, after the fashion of the English people, who seem particularly anxious that none should follow in their footsteps without being clearly made aware by whom the same footsteps were imprinted. The window looked into an open space where were the carriages that had brought the various visitors; and beyond this was an attempt at a kitchen-garden, protected from the bleak winds by the universal tamarisk hedge. The walls of the room were hung with old prints of the "Flight from Moscow," and other incidents in the great Napoleon's career, in comparison with which two water-colour drawings of the "Dyke" and the "Inn" were bright and cheerful. There was a looking-glass over the fireplace, to the left of which was a book-case, with volumes of the *Family Herald*, and to the right a pair of folding green baize doors, which appeared to screen a cupboard, but whose mystery was revealed at a later hour that same afternoon. The side

of the room opposite to the fireplace was formed of wainscoting, and through the wooden partition, against which was a sofa of black horsehair, the laughter and conversation of the party that filled the front room could be distinctly heard. It was echoed, however, by the party in the back room, as, with appetites sharpened by their ride through the brisk air of the Downs, they did full justice to the good things that had come in the hamper from Mutton's.

"I wonder," said Edgar, as he stood by the window, seeing to the iced champagne, "I wonder if, among the names that have been scratched on this window, we should find that of Azimoolah Khan?"

"Azi how much?" said Frederick Galloway, as he unwired a bottle and placed Helen's glass in readiness to receive the first gush of the creamy draught,—"Azi how much? Don't know the party. Spell it again."

Pop went the champagne cork, followed by Frederick Galloway's declaration—

"There, Miss Melladew, that's genuine nectar!"

And as she glanced at Gilbert Ansley, and saw

that he too was thinking of Mr. Pordage and his "nectar," she smiled at the remembrance that the words evoked. Frederick Galloway noted the smile, and interpreting it for more than it really meant, was more than ever determined upon the serious cutting-out work that he had in store for "the parson."

"But who was the person with the foreign name?" asked Ella Hardy.

"Azimoolah Khan," replied Edgar; "and if he was inclined to follow the fashion that he found prevalent here, it is quite within the bounds of probability that his diamond-ring may have made some of the scratches on these window-panes. But thereby hangs a tale."

"Which you will, perhaps, unfold," said Kitty Galloway.

"Very well," replied Edgar. "Will you have it in the G. P. R. James style? 'It was on a fine sunny morning, in the summer of 1854, that a solitary horseman might have been discerned—' No! that won't do. Let me try the more modern sensational style, and denote the horror in the very first chapter, and then work up to it in three volumes. It was, then, in this very room that

the terrible Indian mutiny was planned, and the horrors of Cawnpore were conceived!"

Edgar's statement at once created the sensation that he had claimed for it. Some exclaimed in incredulity, and some cried out for a fuller explanation.

"It is really true," said Edgar; "or, if not literally true, yet not very far from the truth. It came about in this way. In the London season, and also in the Brighton season, of the summer of 1854, one of the distinguished foreigners who was seen, and sought, and fêted everywhere, was an Indian prince, named Azimoolah Khan; or rather he passed as a prince, and had princely means to back his pretensions. But by birth he was no more than a khitmutghar, or servant, who, by his attendance upon an English family in India, had picked up a good knowledge both of French and English, in which languages he showed great proficiency, both in writing and conversation. Then he rose to be a teacher in the Government schools at Cawnpore; and then he became the right-hand man — the vakeel or prime minister, as it were — of that fiendish scoundrel, Nana Sahib. They were fit

companions in every respect. But Azimoolah surpassed his patron at least in one respect, he could speak English, and the Nana could not, although he took every opportunity to cultivate the society of the English people. So the Nana sent this Azimoolah to England, that he might personally bring before the East India Company what the Nana considered to be his claims for the pension that they had granted to the Peishwa of Poonah, — that Bajee Rao, the last of the Mahratta kings, who had adopted Nana Sahib as his son. It was the refusal of this pension that in a great measure caused Nana Sahib to turn round upon that English society that he had previously courted, and play the infamous part that has made his name to be execrated throughout the world."

Edgar's feelings became so hot that he had to cool them awhile with champagne, and Miss O'Fay was heard to murmur to Mrs. Melladew how true it was that the love of money was the root of all evil.

"Well, to continue my story," said Edgar, "Azimoolah was handsome, and of courtly polished manners, and he not only won the heart

of a young English lady, who, happily for herself, was not permitted by her friends to return with him to India; but he was admired by other belles of the season, and received on the most friendly terms in the houses of many of the aristocracy. A wealthy Indian prince, who is handsome and accomplished, and can converse in English and French as though he had been born to speak those languages, is not to be caught every day; and whether he rode in Rotten Row, or over the Brighton Downs, he found himself not only to be the cynosure of neighbouring eyes, but the companion of rank and fashion and graceful English girls, who must now look back with a shudder on their intimate relations with such a wretch. Well, this precious scoundrel failed to obtain for that other precious scoundrel, his master, anything like a promise from the Leadenhall Street magnates that they would continue to Nana Sahib the pension of the old Mahratta king, who had died, three years previously, at his palace near Cawnpore: so Azimoolah prepared to return to India. But before he did so he came to this very Dyke House,—his doctor, as it was said, recommending him this situation for the purity of the air; and

here he remained three weeks. This was his sitting-room."

"My dear Edgar," said his mother, "what dreadful things you are telling us. Do let us get out of this room into the open air."

"Wait a moment for the last chapter of my owre true tale," said Edgar. "Here he sat, in this very room,—perhaps, mother, in your very chair." Mrs. Melladew leaped out of it as though Banquo's ghost had taken possession of it; "and he passed his days in writing—writing—writing. But writing what? Ay, there's the rub. But, as he was continually receiving despatches and messages, and as continually sending them away by overland route to his master, the Nana, there seems but little doubt that in those documents, that were too precious to be sent away save by a trusty Indian messenger, the various plans for the great mutiny must have been developed, consequent upon the failure of Azimoolah's special mission. Revenge is sweet, especially to an Asiatic; and Azimoolah may have had his own particular dish of revenge somewhat spiced by the rejection of his suit to that fair young English maiden, whom he had wished

to make one of the ornaments of his Bithoor palace.

"It is even said that the first copy of the proclamation for the mutiny was written in this room. It was Azimoolah, too, who wrote that brief letter that was brought to the Cawnpore garrison, on the twenty-first day of the siege, by poor Mrs. Greenway, in which the Nana made that promise of the safe passage to Allahabad that Sir Hugh Wheeler was compelled, by the very extremity of his position, to accept. It was Azimoolah who conveyed to the Nana Sir Hugh's stipulations; and it was Azimoolah who, on that memorable 27th of June, 1857, stood with his master on the banks of the Cawnpore river, and helped him in the execution of that frightful deed of treachery which, commencing with the massacre at the embarkation, was fully consummated by the murder of the women and children in the house of horrors. Yes, this room was the last English lair of that bloodthirsty Indian tiger, ere he sprang upon his hapless victims!"

This was too much for Mrs. Melladew, who begged for an immediate adjournment to the open air: so there was a general movement to the

door. But Ella Hardy thanked Edgar for his narrative.

"I must tell my mother," he said, "that Mr. Thacker, the worthy landlord of this little inn, besides entertaining here that horrible Azimoolah Khan, at a time when he was fêted and caressed by the leaders of fashion, has also had the honour of receiving royalty in this house. My mother will be mollified when she hears that not only has William the Fourth been here, but also our Queen and the late Prince Consort, when, in February, 1842, they spent a month in Brighton. And at least one of the survivors of the Cawnpore massacre has been here to see Azimoolah's quarters. If you remember, there were four who made a miraculous escape—two officers and two privates. The privates died soon after, leaving only the two officers, Captain Mowbray Thomson and Lieutenant Delafosse, to tell the tale of Azimoolah and Nana Sahib's treachery, which tale has since been told in the Dyke House by Lieutenant Delafosse."

They had not gone many yards from the Dyke House when their party was met by two gipsy women, whose scarlet cloaks had already attracted Ella's attention.

"These two women," said Edgar, "are sisters, named Gentilla—or Genty, as she is commonly called—and Patience; and there is a third sister, who rejoices in the name of Black Sal. Yonder she is, I fancy, superintending the 'Aunt Sally,' to which Frederick Galloway appears to be inviting my sister. Genty and Patience hang about the Dyke during the season, and beg and tell fortunes; and, as they have been here for the last fifteen or sixteen years, they may almost be regarded as a portion of the natural scenery of the Dyke. At any rate, their scarlet cloaks are effective bits of colour, and they are kept well supplied with them by lady visitors, many of whom are weak-minded enough to listen to their yarns."

Genty and Patience came to meet them with that wheedling manner of mingled impudence and servility with which the gipsies ply their trade. "Let me tell you your fortune, my pretty gentleman! Cross the poor gipsy's hand, my pretty lady, and you shall hear what the stars say. Have the pretty lady's fortune told, my pretty gentleman!" According to the gipsy theory they were all pretty, and all wanted to hear the voice of the stars as expounded by the Zingari

intelligence, and all had in their pockets pieces of silver that possessed the magic charm of opening the red-cloaked sybil's lips.

Although Kitty Galloway thought that it would rather be fun to have their fortunes told, yet, as many strangers were on the spot, she forbore to put her idea into execution; so she passed them in her riding-habit, and went on to her brother Frederick, to beg him to remember that he was not at the Derby, and not to bore Miss Melladew with his invitations to take a shy at the dolls, and join him in the vulgar game of Aunt Sally.

And, indeed, the whole party turned deaf ears to the gipsies' invitations. But the red-cloaked Genty and Patience were not to be shaken off so easily, and continued to follow them, supplementing their proffered vaticinations by imaginary fragments of biography which they hoped might pierce the tender hearts of the ladies,—how that a husband was down with the fever, poor soul! and that no end of children were crying for bread; and how that the value of a plateful of broken vittles would be thankfully received. And then, when these appeals to pity proved to be so many

failures, they recommenced their appeals to credulity, which were equally unsuccessful.

At length Edgar lost all patience, and thus addressed the lady of that name and her sister Gentilla: "Now, look here, you two! we have come here to see the landscape, and not to be pestered by you. I know you very well, and all about you, and I can tell your fortunes better than you can tell mine. You say that your husband is down with the fever. Now, you know very well, Genty, that your husband, James Hazlegrove, came home the other night in a state that he described as 'tight;' and, as you had been drinking with him, you know very well that his being 'tight' meant that he was uncommonly drunk, and that you were not sober. And then, you know, you had a quarrel, and a fight, and though you stood up like a man, yet, after two or three rounds, you got such a knock-down blow that you couldn't pick yourself up again. And, as your loving husband, who is so down with the fever, poured no less than three buckets of water over your prostrate form in his vain endeavours to bring you to, he concluded that he had killed you outright; so summoning to your

aid your sisters, Patience and Black Sal, he bolted; but was afterwards apprehended and taken before the Hove bench, where the only person who could say a word in his favour was his forgiving spouse. Shall I tell you any more of your fortune, Genty?"

Mrs. Gentilla Hazlegrove signified that she had heard quite enough.

"But you shall hear more, if you don't take yourselves off," said Edgar. "Although I am not Mr. Scott, yet I am a magistrate, and I will soon let you know what your future fortunes will be, if you don't make yourselves scarce."

The announcement that he was a magistrate was as effectual for his purpose as was the travelled Briton's fictitious boast, "I am the Lord Mayor," whenever he desired to secure the respect of the uneducated foreigner. With the fear that this dreaded magistrate would make them exchange their free bandit life for the inside of a gaol, Genty and Patience quickly drew off, merely contenting themselves with a muttered parting prediction as to the ultimate destination of the pretty gentleman. Their retreat was all the more rapid from their gaining sight of another

party, just arrived at the Dyke House, on whom they swooped as a more practicable quarry. And not long after, Edgar and his companions saw an evident "lover and his lass" listening to the elder gipsy's twaddle, while she searched their palms and ruled their planets according to the amount of their gifts.

CHAPTER XV.

A LITTLE SLIP.

"THE not being let alone," said Gilbert Ansley, as they were all seated on the short turf on the upper part of the slope, just out of the reach of the wind, and overlooking the map-like landscape in the direction of Poynings and Woodmancote—"the not being let alone is the great drawback of all show-places, whether they are works of art or nature. The infliction of a verger or guide, whom you can no more succeed in shaking off than if he were the 'old man of the sea,' has always gone far to spoil the pleasure I have felt in a cathedral or abbey. And any spot like this Dyke is sure to be infested by guides, and gypsies, and people selling gingerbread and nuts. I have always thought that the greatest charm of visiting any show-place 'by the pale moonlight' would be in

the probable security that you would thereby obtain of freedom from these pests."

"Here is the best guide for a spot like this," said Edgar, as he unfolded a sheet of the Ordnance map, and spreading it out on the turf, pointed out the various places in the view, which were made still more clear to their eyes by the field-glasses they had brought with them. Edgar was tolerably well acquainted with the country, from having hunted it on several occasions, and so, with the aid of the map and his information, his party made themselves fully independent of the encumbering services of a guide.

And it was a very remarkable scene—as much so for its singular foreground as for the wide panorama of thoroughly English scenery that could be viewed from that foreground. For the spot on which they were resting was on the highest portion of the South Downs, and the great bank of earth sloped with the sharpness of a high-pitched roof, or as though it were a great buttress in nature's fortification, for the distance of six or seven hundred feet, to the great stretch of plain that forms the weald of Sussex. Along the southern side of this extensive plain the rolling Downs

abruptly terminate in similarly precipitous earthworks to those at the Dyke; and the undulating Down scenery, which somewhat resembles that of the Cheviots, though on a smaller scale, is suddenly exchanged for the flat and fruitful valley stretching far away from the chalk hills to the low woodland plains of Hampshire and Surrey. Looking from the Pisgah heights of the Dyke over the map-like prospect of the weald of Sussex, the eye can range over a hundred and twenty miles of country, and note six counties and sixty churches, with wide-spreading woods and park-like scenery, chequered with the golden gleams of the stubble corn. It is a remarkable landscape, even without the adjunct of the Devil's Dyke.

For, as a matter of course, this bold earthwork of nature—which has been continued by art so as to take a horse-shoe form, by cutting a wide winding chasm through the Down to the depth of the adjacent plain—all this mighty work has been attributed by popular superstition, not to the Romans, who constructed it for a camp, and to whom such stupendous engineering undertakings seemed to come naturally, but to the great enemy of mankind. Yet, notwithstanding this fathering

of such skilled work upon the evil one, the popular legend that connects him with this and the like wonders delights to depict him as a stupid and blundering giant, who merely ceased from his night's task of cutting a trench through the Downs—in order to let in the sea upon that beautiful weald and those sixty churches—because an old woman held up a candle behind a sieve, and he must needs take it for the rising sun. This legend is variously told by different writers, and has been cleverly dressed up, at great length, by Mr. Ainsworth, in his "Ovingdean Grange." He does not, however, mention that the earth-work of the Dyke is popularly called "The Poor Man's Wall," which, notwithstanding the theory of the writer in Knight's "Land we Live in," that "this name arose perhaps from the shelter it afforded shepherds from the bleak winds of winter," has precisely the same meaning as "the Devil's Dyke,"—"poor man" being a Sussex synonym for "devil," and applied to him as a contemptuous epithet. This horse-shoe shaped "Poor Man's Wall" is the highest spot in the Downs, and, commanding as it does so wide a view, it must, in the old Roman times, have formed a

singularly strong place for a camp, more especially when the natural cleft in the Downs was widened by art into the military defence of the *agger*—the great ditch now called "the Dyke." A ditch of the usual dimensions may have been carried across the Down on the southern side of the camp, from the valley of the weald to the end of the great cutting, and in that case the camp would have been impregnable.

The Melladew party moved on round the spur of the hill, so as to get back to the Dyke House by the path that led along the brow of the great cutting, observing as they went the various views over Poynings, with its little cruciform church and square tower, the woods of Danny Park, and the clusters of farm-buildings at Saddlescomb and elsewhere, snugly situated in the coombs and winding valleys that honeycombed the undulating surface of the Downs. And so they passed round the oval to the great trench that has given to the spot its chief celebrity. Mrs. Melladew, somewhat prosaically, pronounced the Dyke to be no better than a great railway cutting—to which indeed its smooth shelving sides, and narrowed track at the bottom, presented no slight simi-

larity. The historical knowledge of others of the party enabled them to set the scene before them as a spot where Romans and ancient Britons had encamped, and may have stood a siege and fought, and where many Roman coins have been found. Gilbert Ansley told them that the Duke of St. Albans had chosen this spot for his hawking parties; and he related the popular legends of the place, and shewed the origin of the widely-spread belief that ascribed all such titanic earth-works or gigantic undertakings to diabolical agencies, and linked the satanic name to many a fairer though not stranger scene than that of the Devil's Dyke.

Frederick Galloway also told his story of the spot. How Tom Poole had wagered a champagne dinner for twelve that he would drive tandem from the top to the bottom of the steep slope of the Dyke; how he took the precaution, first of all, to enjoy his share of the dinner, and how he then safely accomplished his task without much difficulty. Edgar, too, had something to say concerning the hunting difficulties of the locality, and how he had once, when out with the Brookside harriers, steered his horse down the grassy side of

the Dyke, had safely arrived at the bottom, and had been complimented upon his seat, shoulders, and pluck by Mr. Saxby himself. This brought out Mrs. Melladew, who hoped that her son would not again be guilty of such madcap folly, and would by no means think of proposing such an equestrian feat to any of the present company as a wind-up to their day's picnic. But Edgar assured her that he had not the least intention of doing so; on the contrary, instead of riding, he only proposed that the young ladies should walk a little way down the side of the Dyke, even if they were not disposed to go all the way: though he declared that it was fully worth their while to get quite down to the bottom of the trench, in order to look up to its summit, and gain an adequate idea of the immense size of the work.

The young ladies so quickly agreed to the proposal that it was useless for the elders of the party to urge that the riding-habits of three out of the four were not very well adapted for the proceeding. But the three young ladies in question declared that they could manage very well indeed, by gathering up their habits with one hand, while they gave the other to any gentleman who would

lend them assistance. Edgar Melladew at once proffered his services to Ella Hardy, and Gilbert Ansley was thereby compelled to offer his aid to Kitty Galloway, which arrangement left Frederick Galloway, greatly to his joy, to devote himself to Helen Melladew. As Gilbert Ansley's sister was not encumbered by a habit, she preferred to be left alone, and to get down the hill with a semi-slide, so Frank Galloway joined her, and adopted the same method of progression.

In this fashion they got on very well, Ella, Helen, and Kitty holding up their habits over their riding-trousers, and giving their right hands to the three gentlemen, who piloted them and supported them as the slippery nature of the turf demanded. Sometimes they went with a slide, sometimes with a slip, but they contrived to make good progress, and accomplished the descent of the first half of the slope in a very creditable way, and would have gone quite to the bottom had not their seniors warned them not to over-fatigue themselves, and begged them to return. This they did; but they felt themselves compensated for the trouble that they had taken, by the enlarged comprehension that it gave them of the

nature of the gigantic cutting. There was also some little fun in the novelty of the proceeding; and perhaps Frederick Galloway was not the only gentleman of the party who felt that the support that he afforded to his lady comrade, and the necessary detention of her hand and pressure of her arm, and, it may also be added, the occasional urging of her habited form on to his shoulder in a way that was calculated to shoot him down the declivity, unless he planted himself firmly on the bank—that all these pressing indications of the young lady's presence did but greatly enhance the pleasures of the proceedings.

"When I get back to the Dyke House," said Kitty Galloway, as soon as she had recovered herself from a slip that had fairly precipitated her into Gilbert Ansley's arms, "I shall suggest to the landlord that he should set up Alpenstocks, or Malvern poles, or something of that sort, and sell or lend them to visitors who wish to get up and down the Dyke."

"To make them independent of sticks of gentlemen?" asked Gilbert Ansley.

"I flatter myself I am cutting out the parson," thought Frederick Galloway, who was doing his

best to make himself agreeable and serviceable to Helen Melladew.

Although the descent had not been so easy as it is in the oft-quoted proverb, yet it was easier than the ascent. To look up at the three elder ladies on the path above them, was like looking up from the street to the three highest pinnacles of a cathedral: and the shoes of the climbers had now become so glazed from the slippery grass that they could with difficulty sustain their footing. They had got more than half way up to the path, when Ella Hardy, who had paused "to look at the view"—which was a good excuse for taking breath—and had for the moment loosed her hold of her companion's hand, in turning round to make a fresh step, slipped in a fold of her habit, which she had allowed to fall to her feet, and suddenly shot down the slope of the hill for the distance of two or three yards, before Edgar had time to catch her by the hand and arrest her descent.

He was at once by her side, anxiously enquiring if she was hurt; but she was too much occupied, like Antigone, in making a decent arrangement of her drapery to make any

immediate reply. In fact she felt so shaken and confused by her heavy fall, that for some seconds she could scarcely tell whether or no she had received any very special hurt. A sharp thrill of pain through her left arm, as Edgar helped to raise her to a standing position, quickly undeceived her as to having escaped scathless.

"I have hurt my arm," she said; "and I think badly. I fear that it is broken."

"Broken! oh, I hope not!" said Edgar, anxiously, as he supported her. "Try to raise it."

She did so, and, as it fell helplessly, the pain of the exertion brought an involuntary expression of anguish to her face.

"What is the matter? are you hurt, Ella? asked Helen Melladew, as Frederick Galloway piloted her to the spot.

"I have hurt my arm," she replied, quietly. "But do not alarm my aunt. With your brother's help I can get back to the inn. But I fear that I shall have to give up hearing the Bishop of Oxford to-night."

Helen pinned up Ella's habit, so that it should not be the means of giving her a second trip;

and while her left arm hung helplessly at her side Edgar took her right arm and helped her up the steep acclivity, feeling dreadfully anxious lest she should again fall through any lack of care on his part. The path on the brow of the Dyke seemed a terribly long way off; and the ascent was so steep and slippery that it was hard work even for one who was not disabled to climb to the summit. His movements, too, were greatly fettered by those of his fair burden, who could only get on with difficulty, and was beginning to feel faint from the exertion and the violence of the pain. That she should be leaning and pressing upon him would certainly have been most agreeable under different circumstances; and, even as it was, their mutual position caused feelings of pleasure to be mingled with those of anxiety and alarm that filled Edgar's breast. Very few words were spoken by either; nor, indeed, did the exertion demanded by the ascent of the hill admit of much conversation. At each step, too, Ella Hardy was becoming less able to fight off the creeping and sickening feeling of approaching faintness, and was rapidly succumbing to the effects of those painful sensations that

precede the loss of consciousness. The Dyke was truly the Hill of Difficulty to these pilgrims.

They had almost accomplished the ascent, and were within a step or two of the path, and of the outstretched hands of Miss O'Fay and Mrs. Melladew, when Ella Hardy's failing strength gave way; and, suddenly, like the snapping of a bow, she sank, and would have fallen had not Edgar supported her as she dropped upon his shoulder and sank within his encircling arms: her head thrown back, and her beautiful face, pallid with the marbled hue of faintness, upturned to his, he thought that he had never seen her look more lovely. Her plumed riding hat and tight-fitting habit with its long folds, formed a dress to set off her tall and lithe yet full figure to the very best advantage; her tightly braided black hair, with its crimson ribband, contrasted with the snowy skin; and, if anything was wanting to complete the effect that she produced upon her supporter, it was her state of helplessness that made her now so dependent upon him. Borne into his arms, as it were by controlling fate, should he accept it as an omen for the future, and the initial of his destiny? Such was the thought

that shot through Edgar's brain; and though dismissed for the present, it was because the crisis demanded brisk action and not contemplative reflection.

There was a great commotion—no screaming, it is true; but a bustle and bewilderment, as Edgar bore her safely to the path, and there, kneeling on one knee, laid his fair burden quietly on the turf, and supported her head. "I fear that she has broken her arm," he said to Miss O'Fay. "She must have fainted from the shock and pain. We must get her back to the inn, and send to Brighton for a doctor."

Miss O'Fay knelt down by her niece, took off her riding-hat, and chafed her hand. No water was obtainable; but a *vinaigrette* was of service, and in a few minutes Ella Hardy heaved a deep sigh and unclosed the dark sweeping lashes of her lustrous eyes. Her gaze first fell on the earnest look of Edgar Melladew; and the rich peach-like bloom came once more into her pallid cheeks, as she found herself supported against his knee and upheld by his arm.

"I think I must have fainted," she said, somewhat feebly and wanderingly, as she endeavoured

to regain her scattered senses. "How foolish I must have been! Don't be distressed, dear auntie, I shall soon be all right again: but I have hurt my arm a little. I will walk now, if you please," she said to Edgar; and added, "you have been very good to me;" as though the words came direct from her heart and could not be repressed. If Edgar said nothing it was not because he did not hear and mark the words.

He assisted her to rise. By a brave effort she kept down her feelings of acute pain, and stood erect, defiant of the anguish that her wounded arm was causing her.

"Do you think that you can walk to the inn?" asked Miss O'Fay.

"Oh, yes, auntie!" she replied, cheerfully. "It is close at hand, and I can manage the short walk very well. But I fear that I shall not be able to ride home, and that you will have to make room for me in your carriage."

"It will not be fit for you to leave the inn, my dear Ella," replied her aunt, "until a doctor has seen your arm."

"I was just about to propose going for one," said Edgar. "My hack is, I think, a quicker one

than yours, Ansley, or yours," and he turned to the two Galloways; "and if you will give your arm to Miss Hardy, Ansley, I will get back to the Dyke House and ride off without loss of time. Every half hour is precious." His mother and Miss O'Fay approved his plan.

"I am so much obliged to you, and so sorry to give you so much trouble," said Ella Hardy: and her looks spoke her gratitude.

"It is all through my fault," said Edgar, "that you have met with your accident; and I shall never forgive myself for having persuaded you to get down such a slippery place." And he walked away at full speed; and when he had got over the stile at the end of the path, he ran up the hedge side towards the inn stables, and made such good use of his legs, that, by the time the rest of the party had got within fifty yards of the Dyke House they met Edgar galloping to Brighton as fast as his horse could carry him. He did not draw rein as he passed them, but raised his hat, threw a paper to his sister, and an expressive look to Ella Hardy, who was leaning on Gilbert Ansley's arm, and was evidently suffering great pain.

On the scrap of paper that he had thrown to his sister, Edgar, while his horse was being saddled, had scribbled in pencil:—"I have ordered them to get the room ready for Miss Hardy. There was a doctor there half an hour ago with a picnic party. I have sent a messenger after him; but I shall bring Dr. Tanner Jones, or some one else, with proper splints and appliances, and a carriage for Miss Hardy." By the time that Helen Melladew had deciphered the scribbled note, its writer was a distant speck, galloping over the Downs at a pace that must have made his hack imagine himself to be partaking in a burst with the Brooksides.

Ella Hardy was thankful to reach the Dyke House; for her arm was exquisitely painful, and the slight movement of walking appeared to increase the acuteness of the pain. The landlord, Mr. Thacker, came out to meet them, and said that, in accordance with Mr. Melladew's orders, he had prepared as well as he was able, in a rough way, for the young lady's accommodation. His own infirmity of lameness, perhaps, made him the more disposed to pity the young lady for the accident that had befallen her, and which may

have maimed her for life; and his sympathy showed itself in his desire to do everything that lay in his power to alleviate her sufferings. He had already sent after the doctor who had come to the Dyke with a picnic party; and, as they could not have rambled to any great distance, he expected him to arrive shortly.

When they had entered the room in which they had lunched and heard the story of Azimoolah Khan, they scarcely recognized it. The luncheon-table and all traces of their repast had been cleared away; and the landlord's daughter had converted the apartment into a bedroom. The bed itself was to the right of the door; and, during the time of their luncheon, had been concealed behind the folding green-baize doors, whose mystery was now explained. It was the revelation of one of the landlord's secrets; for when, during the day, the bed was folded back behind the doors, the visitors could not suspect its existence, which was necessitated by the limited accommodation that the small house allowed for the landlord's family. Toilet appliances had been placed in the room, and a curtain screened the lower portion of the window.

The women of the house proffered their assistance; and everything that could be devised to mitigate Miss Hardy's pain, was done.

"I wonder if this was Azimoolah's bed," she said, with a smile, as she was laid upon it. She had not forgotten Edgar's story; nor was she likely to forget it, or that room. And long afterwards, its minutest accessories—from the print of the "Flight from Moscow" to the volumes of *The Family Herald*—recurred to her memory with photographic vividness.

As her riding-habit could not be drawn from off her wounded arm, it was cut away. Half an hour elapsed before the arrival of the surgeon who had been sent for from the picnic party, he and his companions having wandered to a greater distance than was anticipated. He at once attended to his patient, and found her arm fractured above the elbow. As the swelling was increasing, he only made use of one of the splints that the landlord and Gilbert Ansley had been preparing for the emergency; and, placing Ella Hardy in a comfortable position upon the pillows, they awaited the arrival of Edgar and the carriage.

He arrived more quickly than they could have thought possible, and brought with him Dr. Tanner Jones, who approved of all that had been done by his brother practitioner. Ella then took her seat in the carriage, accompanied by her aunt and Dr. Tanner Jones, and drove back to Brighton, though not with the prospect of going that evening to the Pavilion to hear the Bishop of Oxford. And so ended the picnic to the Dyke—a very memorable day, as it proved, to more than one character in this story.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. PORDAGE TAKES A RUBBING.

THE Rev. Pursey Pordage, rector of Melladew, was much better, as his curate had correctly stated, and was, indeed, quite recovered from his croquet accident, except for a slight suspicion of lameness in his damaged leg; but he was now able to get about and take walks, although he could not yet indulge in such feats of pedestrianism as he had lately attempted for the purpose of subduing his growing tendency to increase in bulk. But he had resumed his daily practice with the dumb-bells, and struggled, as vainly as ever, to make them touch behind his back.

On the morning of the day on which Gilbert Ansley had gone with the picnic party to the Dyke, his rector received from a clerical friend a

letter, that at once threw him into so great a state of excitement, that dumb-bell practice and other sanatory measures were for that morning postponed or forgotten. The letter communicated the startling and welcome news of the discovery of a beautiful brass in the sequestered little village church of Willowby, which was then undergoing restoration under the care of Mr. Pordage's rectorial friend. The existence of this brass had, apparently, not been known; for it was not mentioned in Dr. Plash's History of the County; and it had not been catalogued by Waller, Cotman, Boutell, Gough, Manning, Haines, or by the Diocesan Architectural Society, which would naturally have included Willowby in its sphere of operations. Its discovery, therefore, was a real find, that threw Mr. Pordage into a state of intense enthusiasm and excitement.

It appeared from the letter of his friend, the rector of Willowby, that during the repairs consequent upon the re-seating of the church they had removed a large pew of the Jacobæan period, situated at the east end of the south aisle, and belonging to the squire of the parish; and that, underneath the flooring of the pew, had been

discovered a brass, in excellent preservation, of the three figures of a knight and his two wives, standing under a triple-headed floriated canopy, with a black-letter inscription at the foot, bearing the date 1411. This knight—said Mr. Pordage's correspondent—had possessed estates in the parish of Willowby, which had afterwards passed to another family, wholly unconnected with him, who had erected the Jacobæan pew and had not taken any means to indicate the existence of the memorial that the pew concealed. It had thus passed away from observation; and any county historian or ecclesiologist who had bestowed a few lines of print upon the little church, had only done so for the sake of mentioning its Norman south doorway and curious tympanum. Therefore this Willowby brass was altogether a discovery, and a most interesting addition to existent specimens. In order that it might not be injured—wrote the rector of Willowby—he had loosely boarded it over during the temporary stoppage of the repairs and his own brief absence from the parish. No one had yet seen it; but if his friend Mr. Pordage should wish to come at once to see it, and to rub it, he had left

orders with his clerk to remove the boards and to attend to Mr. Pordage's instructions.

Such was the communication, and it gave the rector of Melladew the very greatest delight. He determined, without any delay, to start off to Willowby, which was in the next county, and to which he could approach within four miles by the railway; and, on further consulting *Bradshaw*, he found that he should be able to get to Arndle, which was the nearest station to Willowby, by 12.15 P.M., and could leave it at 5.50, which would give him about three hours for the rubbing of the brass; and, if it were of the dimensions that his friend indicated, this would be none too long a time in which to secure a careful rubbing.

Before long he had arranged his plans, had provided himself with the requisite paper and heel-ball, and was driving off to catch the train, being in a flutter of excitement lest he should miss it, and be detained for another day before he could make the acquaintance of this illustrious unknown—the long-hidden brass. But he was all in good time for his train, and in due course was whirled to his destination.

Arndle was only a hamlet, and could not boast

a vehicle of any kind—not even a carrier's cart—that was available for Mr. Pordage's use; and, of course, his friend the rector had not sent a carriage to meet him. He had then no other alternative than to walk to Willowby, a proceeding that he only regretted because it would diminish his time for being with the brass. The walk there on such a hot day would, Mr. Pordage thought, do him good, and would act as a sudorific, which his recent croquet accident had prevented him from taking. It would help to rouse and circulate his blood, which had latterly seemed to stagnate for lack of his accustomed exercise, and the walk would thus be of greater service to him than anything else that he could have taken. So Mr. Pordage trudged off under a blazing sun, and along a dusty road, gasping and wheezing as he went, but in very good spirits, and highly elated at the thought of the object of his expedition. The leg that he had hurt at the Melladew croquet was still stiff, and this somewhat hampered his progress, but on the whole he got along bravely.

Arrived at length at Willowby, distressingly hot and dusty, and wishing that he could brew a jugful of Pordage's nectar for his immediate con-

sumption, he refreshed himself, as well as he could, by mixing his flask of sherry at a road-side spring, and using it to wash down the hard biscuit that formed his luncheon and sole refreshment after his morning walk. Then he set out to find the clerk, and lost some valuable time in the search for that functionary, who was said to be "thacking"—by which was meant thatching—the stacks of a neighbouring farmer, and who had locked up the keys of the church in his own cottage. A boy was despatched for him, and in the meantime Mr. Pordage had an opportunity to cool himself by sitting on a tombstone in the churchyard, and studying the exterior of the shrine that concealed the hidden gem of which he had come in quest. He chafed over his detention, more especially as it would throw him so late with his proposed work, that he feared he should be unable to complete the rubbing of the brass in time to get back to Arndle for his train. Through one of the windows of the south aisle he could see the boards that covered the brass from view; with which prospect he had to content himself until the arrival of the clerk from his thacking. Under these circumstances the tympanum of the

Norman doorway, which had hitherto formed the chief feature of the little church that had any interest for the ecclesiologist and antiquarian, had no charms for Mr. Pordage, who, impatient as a lover for the sight of his mistress, or the returning emigrant for the first glimpse of home, was now working himself into a state of feverish anxiety.

After waiting a weary time, which Mr. Pordage's watch told him was fifty minutes, but which his feelings would have numbered at several hours, the clerk appeared with the keys, and gave Mr. Pordage admittance into the church.

For his own part—the clerk said—he couldn't see much in a monnyment that looked more like a big door-plate than a right down monnyment; but the pahson, he set great store by it, and since it had been found he had made a mortal fuss about it, and had told him about a gent as would perhaps come to figure it. If he might make so bold, perhaps the gent he were talking to were the same gent?

Mr. Pordage confessed to being the gent in question, and said that, as he should be some time in figuring the brass, he would not detain the clerk, who would probably be good enough to

leave the keys of the church in his care. This the clerk said he would do, especially as he was compelled to go back to his thacking; but if the gentleman, when he had seen as much as he wanted, would please to lock the church door and leave the key in the lock, no harm would come of it, and he, the clerk, would be back about six o'clock, and would take away the keys and replace the boards over the monnyment. So this was agreed to, and the clerk, having removed the boards and dusted the brass, went away, leaving Mr. Pordage in sole possession.

One glance at the brass sufficed to show the rector of Melladew that his friend had not over estimated its interest and its fine state of preservation. Thanks to its protecting hoarding during the long period of the church's neglect, it had escaped spoliation and the iconoclastic ravages of those Roundhead miscreants, to talk of whose misdeeds always made Mr. Pordage's blood to boil. The brass, in fact, was in as perfect a state as though it had but recently left the hands of its artist. Mr. Pordage was in ecstacies. Before him lay, as it were, a virgin brass; and, if he went down on his knees before it, his form of

adoration for this virgin was for the purpose of more particularly prying into her charms, and scrutinizing those beauties that had so long been veiled from curious view. He was a lover on his knees to the favoured object of his regard.

For some minutes Mr. Pordage abandoned himself to the full revelry of enjoyment; and, if he could have afforded the time, he could have luxuriated thus for hours in the sight of this newly-discovered treasure. The exhumation of Assyrian or Egyptian antiquities had never afforded a larger measure of delight to their explorers and excavators than did the revelation of this long-hidden brass to the rector of Melladew. For, even though Mr. Pordage was not its actual discoverer, he was the first competent person who had examined it—he would be the first to rub it—and, with his friend's permission, he would be the first to transmit a full and critical report of it, illustrated by the rubbing, to the Diocesan Architectural and Ecclesiological Society, of which the rector of Melladew was an active and learned member. And this reminded him that he had no further time to lose in making his rubbing, and that he must rouse himself from a

state of admiring contemplation to that of active work.

Stripping off his coat, he wiped the brass with a silk handkerchief, in order to remove from its glittering surface the slightest speck that had been left there by the clerk's more generalized dusting. He then spread out his paper so as to entirely cover the brass, and kept it firm and tightly stretched by laying the boards around its edges; and then, when, as it were, his canvas was prepared, he set to work at his picture, rubbing with the heel-ball vigorously, and yet with practised delicacy, so as not to tear the paper. His morning's toil and fatiguing walk were all forgotten, and their effects were no longer felt in the glow of enthusiasm that fully possessed him.

There was another glow that overspread him, with which indeed he could have well dispensed; for through the south window of the aisle the afternoon's sun was pouring its hot rays full upon the brass; and, although it displayed its design with great clearness, yet it greatly added to the heat of Mr. Pordage's occupation, which, on such a sultry day, was already sufficiently hot from the position that the brass-rubber was compelled to

assume. When an unusually stout gentleman has to kneel down on a church pavement, and bend forward his head almost to the ground, and at the same time move his one hand and arm with great briskness, the attitude is one that is more likely to engender caloric than coolness; and, bathed alike in perspiration and sunlight—the latter contributing greatly to the creation of the former—Mr. Pordage's attitude might have been taken for that of a sun-worshipper in the act of adoring his luminary. It was certainly very hot work, and it caused the rector of Melladew to puff and blow and whistle to a more than ordinary extent; nevertheless, Mr. Pordage thoroughly enjoyed it. His only regret was that the limited space of time at his disposal caused him to hurry over the work in a way to increase his fatigue; but he did not permit this haste to spoil his rubbing, which was executed with the neatness of finish that always characterized his traced reproductions of monumental brasses.

When four o'clock came—about which time the curate of Melladew was assisting Ella Hardy to the Dyke House—the rector of Melladew was still hard at work, and had yet an important

portion of the rubbing to complete before his labour of love could come to an end. He could not allow himself much more than half an hour longer, as he must then start on his walk to meet the train at Arndle. He would have been very glad of that half hour for a complete rest before setting out; for the heat was excessive, and the sun streamed through the windows directly upon him, greatly increasing the warmth occasioned by his posture and the constant rapid movement of his arm. So far as he had gone, he had secured a very fine rubbing, and the polished black surface of his paper, on which the design was traced in clear white lines, was momentarily spreading in its dimensions. He had now got to the lowest portion of the brass, to the mailed feet and spurs of the knight resting upon a lion, and to the hem of the robes of his two wives with their little dogs. Beneath this was a tablet with a black-letter inscription of five lines, with Lombardic capitals.

"I will make sure of the inscription in a rough way," thought Mr. Pordage, as he rubbed away more rapidly than ever; "and if I have not time to make it come out quite as sharply as the three

figures and the triple canopy, I must come again to get a second rubbing of the inscription for my own collection. It will hang as a *pendant* to the Kidderminster brass of Sir John Phelip. In the meantime, this rubbing will do very well to exhibit at the next meeting of our Architectural Society. What a magnificent thing it is! and how providential that it should have been so well preserved! Its discovery will make quite a sensation."

And, glowing with heat and enthusiasm, Mr. Pordage rubbed away with great rapidity over the black-letter inscription, bringing the lines clearly out, though not with quite as much careful finish as had been bestowed on the other portion of the work.

The clerk returned from his "thacking" about six o'clock, and at once went to the church. No keys were in the lock, according to the gentleman's promise; so he tried the door. It was not locked, and the clerk stepped into the church, where all was perfectly still.

"The gent must ha' left the keys by the monnyment," thought the clerk; "knowin' as I should come there to kiver it wi' the boards. The pahson

ha' gi'n me such precautions to take care o' the monnyment, that if any harm comes to it while he's away, I mun bear the blame of it; so I'd best kiver it up. Though why they should make a monnyment like a great big door-plate, beats me. Yet, I mon't complain, if it puts a few shillings in my pocket from folkses coming to look at it—like this stout gent, who seemed to be extraordinar' took wi' it."

By this time the clerk had made his way to the end of the south aisle, and there saw Mr. Pordage stooping over the rubbing—a sight at which the clerk started back in some alarm. "Why, the gent bain't gone, arter all!" he thought. "Suppose I'd fund the keys in the door and locked him in for the night. What a start it would ha' been, and no house nigher than old Sukey Elsom's, and she stone deaf. Well! if I ain't fairly beat."

He cautiously approached Mr. Pordage, fearing to interrupt him; but he soon found that the gentleman, instead of stooping over the brass, was lying upon it, having fallen forward upon his face, in which posture he remained motionless. The clerk hurried up and bent down over the prostrate form, as it lay upon the black shiny

rubbing, on which appeared, in white skeleton outlines, the figures of the mailed knight and his two wives, who really looked something like spectres to the unaccustomed eyes of the clerk, who had never before seen a brass-rubbing. He raised Mr. Pordage's head, and listened at his lips for an evidence of life, but none came. The truth became apparent to him.

"The poor old gent bain't in a fit; he be dead."

There was not the slightest doubt of this. Mr. Pordage had taken his last rubbing; and, by the time that Gilbert Ansley had conveyed Ella Hardy in safety to the Dyke House, there to await the setting of her broken arm, the rectory of Melladew became vacant by the death of the Rev. Pursey Pordage.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TELEGRAM TO BRIGHTON.

EFT alone with the dead body in the silent church, the parish clerk felt far more awe under the novel circumstance than he had ever entertained for a corpse; although, in the discharge of his professional duties, he so frequently had to be busied with the deserted temple of humanity, from which the soul had but lately flown. But here he was unexpectedly brought face to face with death—death that was sudden and strange, and surrounded with unknown and mysterious adjuncts, in which the brass-rubbing, with its black pall-like ground and skeleton outlines, bore a prominent part. The clerk was awed by the spectacle before him, and for a minute or two was incapacitated by fear from taking any steps either to lend or procure

assistance. Then he roused himself, and stirred his sluggish faculties into action. But Mr. Pordage was too heavy and dead a weight to be moved without aid, and it was even with difficulty that the clerk could sufficiently raise the head and shoulders so as to support them by hassocks, a step that he took with the slender hope that he might even now be deceived in his opinion as to the gentleman's death. He then left the body in that position, locked the church door, and ran for assistance.

As good fortune would have it, the very first person whom he met was none other than the parish doctor, cantering home to the nearest town, after his day's rounds. His errand was soon told, and while the clerk held his horse the doctor hastened into the church. When he reappeared he pronounced that the gentleman was dead indeed, and that the cause of his death was apoplexy, produced, doubtless, by his peculiar occupation in the heat of the sun that shone upon him. If he had walked from the Arndle station, as was probably the case, and had suffered from any unusual excitement, these, said the doctor, would be predisposing causes to induce the fatal attack.

He must have been dead for more than an hour before the clerk found him.

Some labourers returning home from their work were stopped to render assistance, and to procure a cart for the conveyance of the body to the nearest inn, which was in the adjoining village, there to await the inquest, if the coroner should determine that it would be necessary. On searching Mr. Pordage's pockets the doctor found his card-case, and also the letter that had brought him on his last journey to rub the Willowby brass. His name and address were therefore at once made apparent; and the doctor also recalled to mind that the rector of Willowby, in mentioning to him the discovery of the brass, had told him that he had communicated on the subject with his friend the rector of Melladew, who was an enthusiastic brass-rubber, and a bachelor, who, from his increasing infirmities, was not always able to leave home, and who had to entrust his parish chiefly to the care of a curate.

The doctor, therefore, had no hesitation in deciding upon his plan of action. Under his care the body was at once removed to the little inn in the next village, from whence the doctor had no

great distance to ride to his own home in the neighbouring town, where there was a railway station. From there he telegraphed the news of the event to the rector of Willowby; and, as he did not know the name of Mr. Pordage's curate, addressed his other telegram to the curate of Melladew.

Mr. Pordage's servant, Daws, was in waiting with his carriage at the time appointed, but looked in vain for his master's appearance by that train. It was suggested to him that Mr. Pordage, instead of meeting the train at Arndle, might have gone on to the next town, where he could catch the express, and arrive by it at nine o'clock. Daws therefore put up the carriage and waited. He was in the inn-yard when a messenger from the telegraph office came in and ordered a horse to be saddled to take him with a telegram to Melladew.

"I come from Melladew," said Daws, "and am coachman to Mr. Pordage, the rector."

"The rector!" said the messenger. "Oh, this telegram is addressed to the curate—but with no name."

"The curate, Mr. Ansley, is away at Brighton," said Daws.

"At what address?" asked the messenger.

"That I don't justly know," answered Daws.

"Well," said the messenger, "I'll take the telegram back to the office, and see what our clerk thinks had best be done. He'll know what the message is about." In a few minutes the messenger returned, and asked Daws, "Didn't you say that you were coachman to Mr. Pordage, the rector of Melladew?"

"Yes," replied Daws: "I've served Mr. Pordage, as groom and coachman, for the last twelve years."

"Then you've lost your master! Mr. Pordage is dead!" said the messenger, to whom startling events were telegraphed so many times every day that they did not affect him with any special discomposure.

But to poor Daws it was startling news indeed.

"Dead!" he gasped, incredulously. "Never! It's some mistake."

"No mistake at all," said the messenger, with official calmness. "He died of apoplexy in Willowby Church, about 5 P.M. Predisposing cause supposed to be heat, fatigue, excitement, and rubbing the brass—whatever that may mean;

and, if there's any mistake over the telegram, it's in those words, 'rubbing the brass;' but they're spelt plainly enough, though what on earth they mean I can't tell; but people often put queer things into telegrams, not to let the clerks into their secrets."

Poor Daws fully comprehended it, but was too much occupied with his own thoughts to attempt to enlighten the messenger. "Poor master!" he said, "he were as good a master as ever any servant lived under. And to be took off so sudden! Oh, it's dreadful! And to think that this morning I was driving him to his death, and he so full of the figure that he was going to take a picture of. It's awful! Whatever am I to do?"

That was the question; "What was to be done?" At length it was decided, on a consultation between himself and the telegraph clerk, that Daws should be there on the following morning to meet the earliest train for Willowby; that he could then be prepared with Mr. Ansley's Brighton address, in order that the telegram might then be forwarded to him; and that he would that night, on his return to Melladew, communicate the news to his master's doctor, Mr. Johnson, in case he

should also wish to go to Willowby. Having made that arrangement, he drove off to Melladew rectory, sad at heart, and grieved at the intelligence with which he was burdened.

"Whatever's made Daws drive round to the stables?" said Mrs. Jennings, the rector's housekeeper, to Johnson the butler, as she caught the rumbling sound of the wheels. "The master must be staying out the night. I'm glad that I hadn't put the chops down; they'll keep all the better for him when he comes back to-morrow."

A scared kitchen-maid ran in. "Oh, Mrs. Jennings! Oh, Mr. Johnson! poor master's dead! Daws has brought the telegraph to say so!"

"Dead!". said the butler. "Why, he only left this morning."

"Dead!" said the housekeeper. "Why, he ordered these very chops for to-night. What nonsense is the girl talking?" For the idea of sudden death is one that is very hard to be entertained; though, even while Mrs. Jennings spoke, a choking sensation arose in her throat, and she felt unable to check the girl, who was sobbing bitterly, and saying, between her sobs, "It's no nonsense, Mrs. Jennings, it's the dreadful truth."

Daws himself came in, and, even before he had spoken, his very face carried its own confirmation as to the truth of the kitchen-maid's tidings. "It's all true," he said. "We're here to-day and gone to-morrow; and we shall have to suit ourselves with fresh places. We shall never get any better."

"That we shan't, nor yet so good," was the general remark.

"I must go and let Mr. Johnson, the doctor, know about it," said Daws.

"I'll walk up there with you for company's sake," said Mr. Johnson, the butler.

"Oh, pray don't!" said Jane, the housemaid; "don't leave the house unpertected." For, although their master's corpse was many miles away, they already entertained that sensation of death-in-the-house, which leads half-educated people to cling together for protection against fancied ills. Mrs. Jennings joined in the housemaid's request; and, as the chivalrous feelings of the butler were not proof against the feminine appeals, he remained to give the women the support of his moral influence, while Daws set out alone to the surgeon's. On his return he told his fellow-servants that Mr. Johnson had arranged

to accompany him by the early morning train to Willowby; and then they sat up to an unusually late hour discussing the catastrophe that had befallen them; and as the chops would not be required for the master on the morrow, the housekeeper served them up as a light supper wherewith to mitigate their affliction.

The Melladew surgeon possessed the curate's address, and therefore sent on the telegram to him from the railway station. As this was early in the morning, the telegram was delivered to Gilbert Ansley as he was sitting at breakfast with his sister and aunt in Rock Gardens. To say that he was greatly shocked would not sufficiently describe the mingled feelings of surprise and sorrow with which he read the curtly-worded message. During the two years that he had been curate to Mr. Pordage he had continued on the most intimate and friendly terms with his rector, and entertained for him a sincere attachment and regard. Except at such infrequent times as their holiday seasons, rarely a day had passed at Melladew without their meeting, and the rector and his curate were on the most familiar footing. That this sudden death would probably cause him to

remove to another curacy, and would thus terminate his pleasant connection with Melladew and its people, was a thought that, as yet, was scarcely present to his mind, except in a vague and transient way. The one great fact of Mr. Porlage's death was sufficient for the present to absorb all other considerations, and to bring every prospect under the pall of its dark cloud.

As soon as he had somewhat recovered himself Gilbert Ansley went to Cliff Place to see Edgar Melladew. That gentleman was in the balcony, ostensibly reading the morning paper, but with his thoughts greatly occupied upon the accident that had befallen a young lady in the opposite house. They had already sent across to know how she was, and were told that Miss Hardy had passed a bad night, and was very feverish. Helen Melladew would have gone to her at once, had not her mother considered it to be more prudent that she should not disturb the patient until her doctor had given his permission that she should receive her friends.

"Good morning, Ansley!" said Edgar, as he spied the curate on the pavement below, and imagined that he could have come thus early to Cliff Place on no other errand than to be informed

as to the state of Ella Hardy's health; "good morning. She has had a bad night."

For a moment Gilbert Ansley could not think to whom the expressive "she" referred, the shock of his rector's death having somewhat driven from his mind the thought of the comparatively minor event of Miss Hardy's accident at the Dyke. "Oh, indeed!" he said, speaking from the steps of the house, and recovering his memory of the previous day's adventure. "I am very sorry to hear it. Will you come down and speak to me, or is any one with you?"

"I am quite alone," replied Edgar: "my mother and sister are in the other room. What is the matter?"

"I have bad news of Mr. Pordage that would distress them."

"Indeed!" And Gilbert Ansley came up to the front drawing-room as Edgar Melladew stepped into it from the balcony.

"Here is a terrible affair," said the curate to his young squire. "Mr. Pordage, I fear, has had an apoplectic seizure while rubbing a brass at a place called Willowby. A telegram has just reached me from Melladew, sent there by the surgeon who was called to him yesterday after-

noon, and sent on from Melladew this morning by Mr. Johnson, with a supplementary telegram to say that he had left for Willowby."

"Does it leave room for any hope?" asked Edgar.

"Not a shadow," said Gilbert Ansley, solemnly. "Mr. Pordage is dead!"

"Dead?" echoed another voice besides that of Edgar. The exclamation proceeded from Helen, who had quietly entered the room. "Dead! Oh, this is indeed terrible!" She stood with parted lips, and one hand pressed to her heart—too forgetful to interchange the ordinary courtesies of life in the sudden shock of this news of death.

It was the same with Gilbert Ansley. "It is too true," he said. "I had thought to have spared you somewhat of the suddenness of this awful intelligence. I am at once setting out by the first train for Arndle, which Mr. Johnson's telegram tells me is the nearest station for Willowby. No doubt he very rightly divined that I should lose no time in getting to the place where this terrible calamity happened."

"Then it was not at Melladew?" asked Helen,

as she thought of Mr. Pordage's croquet accident on the last day on which she had seen him.

"No, he left there yesterday morning," replied the curate, who then told her all that the telegram had made known to him; and their common sorrow formed a fresh bond of union.

Edgar walked up to the station with Gilbert Ansley, who had not to wait long for his train; and, as he found that he could be at Arndle early in the afternoon, he immediately sent a telegram to Mr. Johnson that he would be with him by the 2.20 train. And so, for the few minutes that they had to spare before the departure of the London train, the curate and his squire conversed on the two events of the preceding day—Miss Hardy's accident at the Dyke and Mr. Pordage's sudden death at Willowby—events which had a controlling power over their own subsequent lives, though for the present they were not in a position to appreciate their full significance. Nevertheless, although their full import was hidden from them, they each of them, in their several ways, even now recognized the fact, that the preceding day was one of those marked days in a life when a standpoint is obtained for the whole future.

On his arrival at the Arndle station Gilbert Ansley was met by the Melladew surgeon, and by him put in possession of all the known particulars of the sad event. Mr. Johnson had just returned from the village inn where the body of Mr. Pordage had been conveyed, and had made arrangements to remove it from there to Melladew that same evening. As Mr. Pordage's regular medical attendant, he had been enabled to make such a statement as to the cause of death that his testimony, in conjunction with that of the surgeon who had been called in on the previous evening, was deemed sufficient by the coroner to dispense with the necessity for an inquest. Mr. Johnson had also sent a telegram to Mr. Pordage's lawyer, directing him to communicate the news to the rector's only brother.

Daws, the coachman, had accompanied the surgeon from Melladew, and thither, at midnight, the three returned, in company with their dread burden. Once again the body of Mr. Pordage was beneath the rectory roof, surrounded by the skeleton forms of his loved brass-rubbings, and buried in that deep sleep from which there should be but one final awakening.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE CHAIN PIER.

THE death of Mr. Pordage was, in many ways, a matter of moment to the Melladew party assembled at Brighton, and caused them to change their plans and movements.

Gilbert Ansley had not returned, and Edgar had gone to Melladew, in order to attend the funeral, which took place on the Saturday, and to appear at church with the mourners on the following Sunday, when the curate preached what is known as the "funeral sermon," and when the church was thronged with curious hearers, as is always the case on such occasions.

During these few days Ella Hardy made but slow progress to recovery, though carefully attended to by Dr. Tanner Jones. The broken arm itself was going on favourably; but she

suffered much from debility and the shock to her system. Helen Melladew passed the greater part of her time with her, and their old school friendship was more than revived. They also saw a good deal of Kitty Galloway and Miss Ansley; and, if the week that dated from the Dyke picnic had been fruitful in no greater event than the increase of the intimacy between the families of Hardy, Ansley, and Melladew, it would have served to leave its mark on some of the chief characters of this story.

Edgar Melladew and Gilbert Ansley returned together to Brighton. On their way from London they had the railway-carriage to themselves; and when the Thames was left far behind them and the South-Down country was spreading before them, the young squire thus addressed the curate: "I may as well take this opportunity of speaking to you on a subject that has occupied my thoughts very much since last Thursday morning—the subject of Mr. Pordage's successor. The living, as you are aware, is in my gift, and I am fully sensible of the responsibility that it entails upon me. It is a matter of great importance that I should appoint to the living some one who

would be more active than, of late years, poor Mr. Pordage was able to be, in carrying out the various duties of the office. I have had my eye for some time past on a gentleman"—and there was a roguish look in his eye as he said this, if Gilbert Ansley could have thought to notice it—"a gentleman who, I feel confident, will admirably fill the post, if only I can induce him to accept it. There is, however, this point to be considered in the matter, and that, my dear fellow, concerns you; for, when I make this appointment, it must necessarily bring to an end your connection with Melladew as its curate."

"Pray do not let that be a hindrance to your views," said Gilbert Ansley, heartily and sincerely; "though I confess that I shall leave the parish with great regret. I only propose to hold the curacy, unless you or the churchwardens should have any objection, until the new rector is appointed."

"I have written to my mother on the subject," said Edgar, "for I should not like to appoint any one who had not her full approval; and I am glad to say, from a letter that I received from her this morning, she entirely coincides in my selection.

My next step, therefore, must be to apply to the gentleman himself; and although the law would allow me six months before filling up the vacancy, yet I think that it would be better for me to make the appointment without delay."

"It would decidedly be the better plan to do so," observed the curate. "A long interregnum is not good for the interests of a parish, and I can hold myself in readiness to leave at any moment. My two years expire to-day."

"Yes, I remembered that," said Edgar, "which was another reason for my mentioning the subject to you to-day. I fear that I shall be in very bad odour with the Melladew folks if they hear that you are likely to leave them, for I well know how deeply attached they are to their curate."

"I am thankful to have earned their esteem; but pray don't let that circumstance weigh with you," said Gilbert Ansley.

"Perhaps," said Edgar, with a roguish twinkle in his eye, "perhaps the rector would retain your services."

"I should certainly not say nay in that case, so far as willingness is concerned," observed Gilbert Ansley. "But there would be no need for the

new rector to keep a curate. Poor Mr. Pordage's case was very different."

"Then," said Edgar, "I suppose that I have nothing to do but to ask the gentleman if he will oblige me by accepting the living."

"Precisely; that must be your next step," replied Gilbert Ansley.

"By the way," said the young squire, "he is a friend of yours."

"A friend of mine!" exclaimed Gilbert Ansley. "May I ask his name?"

"You may, my dear fellow," said Edgar, as he gave him his hand. "His name is Gilbert Ansley, who for the last two years has most zealously discharged the duties of curate of Melladew, and to whom I have now the greatest pleasure in offering the living. Excuse my little acted charade and trial of your patience; and, if you can, pray do me the favour to accept my offer. It will be greatly to the advantage of the parishioners if you will do so."

Gilbert Ansley felt almost stunned. He knew that the Melladews had a large circle of friends and relatives; and he had concluded that, as a matter of course, there would be one among the

number to whom the family living would be presented. The young squire's proposition had therefore come upon him as a complete surprise, so much so, that he scarcely felt able to collect his thoughts on the subject. "I was not prepared for this. It is very good of you!" was all that he could immediately reply.

"The obligation is on my part," said Edgar. "I consider that Mr. Pordage's death has devolved a great responsibility upon me, and I shall feel perfectly satisfied that I have satisfactorily discharged that responsibility now that you have accepted my proposal."

"But I have not yet accepted it," said Gilbert Ansley, with a smile. "I scarcely know how to act, or indeed what to say, for this is so sudden and unexpected. But, whatever may eventually be my decision, I beg you to believe that I equally feel your kindness, whether I accept or decline your offer."

"Oh, but I hope you won't think of declining it," said Edgar, anxiously.

"Will you kindly allow me a little time to think it over?" asked Gilbert Ansley. "There are one or two points that are interwoven in this

matter on which, at present, I am not able to arrive at a judgment. In a day or two I could, perhaps, give you my decision, if you could allow me so long a delay."

"Willingly, my dear fellow," replied Edgar. "Take a month or two, if you like; or five months, if it suits you better. But I sincerely hope that there is nothing that will prevent you from being the new rector of Melladew."

So the matter was settled for the present, and the two friends returned to Brighton. On that same afternoon Mrs. Melladew and her daughter had engaged to take a five o'clock dinner with Miss Ansley and her niece in Rock Gardens, and after dinner to walk on the Chain Pier and watch the sunset; and they were thus engaged when they were joined by the two gentlemen from Melladew.

"This is indeed a sight worth paying twopence for," said Edgar, alluding to the coppers paid for admission to the pier, as they were all strolling upon it, at its farthest and widest end. And, without doubt, it was a spectacle that might have evoked a less prosaic remark, for it was replete with the most poetical and sublime effects. Away over the sea, as they looked towards Worthing, an

immense arc of the heavens was flooded with a brilliant light, varying in hue from burnished gold to roseate amber, streaked here and there with horizontal bars of flame, in which the blazing disc of the sun was dropping slowly into the purplish grey haze that dimmed the sea's horizon line. But beneath this haze the flickering reflection of the amber and gold and fiery red spread, in widening breadths, over the watery expanse, irradiating the ocean with paths of light for the vessels and fishing-boats, whose hulls and sails looked black as they slid across the flashing waves. It was a calm evening, and, beyond the arc of amber light, the sky's hue changed to violet and purple, in which a star or two and the pale figure of the moon were beginning to be visible. The long lines of princely houses that turreted the cliffs, turned their three miles of sea-frontage to the sunset glow, and their white walls were roseate with its radiance.

As the Melladews and Ansleys stood at the farther end of the Chain Pier, and witnessed the splendid panorama of the sunset, they also owned that from no other standing-point could the seaside city of palaces be viewed to so great advan-

tage, or with such completeness. Helen Melladew declared that she must treat herself to that long view of Brighton photographed from the spot where they stood, a copy of which she had seen in Mr. Fox's window; for, although it was so large and long in its shape, yet it was so beautifully executed as to be well-nigh as pictorial as the real scene. And, if Helen Melladew afterwards forgot to make the purchase of this wonderful photograph, Gilbert Ansley remembered her words and carried them into execution for her.

They stayed for some time, scrutinizing the varied beauties of the scene, the spectacular effects of which were momentarily changing as the sun dipped beneath the uttermost wave; whereupon the elder Miss Ansley pronounced it to be growing chill, and Mrs. Melladew seconded her proposal to return to Rock Gardens to tea. The two young ladies pleaded for a few more minutes, in order to watch the wondrous phantasmagoria of the sky and sea, as the warm tints and bright lights were gradually giving place to colder hues. The seniors conceded the point; and, after bidding the young ladies not to be long in following their example, strolled quietly back, past the little shops in the

pier towers, with their fancy fairs and weighing machines, the proprietors of which were exceedingly urgent that Mrs. Melladew should take her seat in their chairs, and be certified as to her weight and height—a proposition to which, it is needless to say, that worthy lady turned a deaf ear.

Edgar Melladew only obeyed the dictates of ordinary politeness in bestowing his conversation on Miss Ansley; but he may have had a special design in drawing her away to a few yards distance from his sister and her brother, ostensibly to be nearer to the stringed band that was playing Kuhner's "Songs of the Forest" Valse, as well as to direct her special notice to a very remarkable effect of light and shade to be observed in the direction of Kemp Town, to see which they were not only obliged to quit their two companions, but also to turn their backs upon them. And certainly, if Edgar Melladew had a design in this strategic movement, Gilbert Ansley was not slow to take advantage of it. Without a moment's loss of time he plunged into the subject that was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Your brother," he said to Helen Melladew, "has this day made me the kindest offer that it is

in his power to bestow upon me; one, of the importance of which I am deeply sensible, and for which I feel unfeignedly grateful to him. He has offered me the vacant rectory of Melladew."

"Yes," returned Helen, "we were so glad to hear it, and shall be very glad that you have accepted it."

"The fact is that I have not accepted it," said Gilbert Ansley.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Helen, in genuine astonishment.

"I have not *yet* accepted it," he explained, "for I am not able of myself to come to a decision, and I can only do so by the aid of another. If I have her sanction, I would then accept your brother's offer."

Now Helen Melladew had frequently heard their curate express his regret that he was unable to have his sister to live with him, because his lodgings did not afford sufficient accommodation for a lady; added to which his sister had promised to be her aunt's companion, and any arrangement that was made for the one would have to include the other. Helen, therefore, remembering this, jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Ansley's hesi-

tation in accepting her brother's proposal arose from his doubts as to whether a residence at Melladew rectory would, under the circumstances, be acceptable to his sister. Acting under this impression, she said, "Of course, as Edgar only mentioned this to you to-day, you have not yet had an opportunity to talk over the subject with her; but I should think that she would not say No to your proposal."

"Indeed I hope not," exclaimed Gilbert Ansley, who at once saw her mistake, and divined its cause. "But I fear that I am not so devoted a brother as you imagine me to be; for I was not thinking of my sister, but of some one else."

"Oh, indeed! I beg your pardon. How stupid I was!" said Helen, with some confusion; for she now perceived that, although there might be a lady in the case, yet that lady was certainly not a sister, but one who was dearer, if not, at present, nearer. Doubtless he was engaged to some one. To whom? Her heart beat fast as these thoughts rapidly chased each other through her brain; and as she looked over the massive woodwork at the green water—as green as though it had been in one of Hook's pictures—as it rose

and fell in idly-lapping waves against the black beams of the pier, she felt a sensation of giddiness and confusion for which the motion of the waves beneath was not altogether accountable.

"No, it was not my sister to whom I referred," said Gilbert Ansley, as he leant over the timbers by her side, and looked out at the waning sunlight. And then he added, as he turned and gazed into her trustful eyes, "Let me confide my secret to you."

She met his gaze for a moment, and then looked absently on the gleaming waters, listening to words that were almost whispered in her ear, so that no bystander could have understood their import.

"My affections," he said, "for some time past, have been deeply engaged to one who possesses every charm and quality for which I should look in a wife, and I have sometimes dared to hope that she has returned my love. God knows whether or no my self-esteem has deceived me in this, and induced me to accept mere courtesy and friendliness for something that is deeper and holier in its nature. But there have been times when I have thought that I need not despair of one day

gaining her love, so that I could ask her to be my own."

"And did you do so?" faltered Helen. It was rushing to a conclusion, certainly; but she scarcely knew what to say, and was anxious to hear who might be their future neighbour and the mistress of Melladew rectory.

"I did not," replied Gilbert Ansley; "I never even spoke to her on the subject. My tongue was tied by several considerations: chiefly, that I had no home to offer her. My income was small; I had but little besides my curacy, and my tenure of that was uncertain. Perhaps, too, I was proud —foolishly proud; but I feared that she might fancy that I thought more of her probable fortune and of her actual social position than I did of herself. And so the days slipped on, and my lips were sealed. I was unwilling to speak the words that might make or mar my happiness; and I scarcely dared to awake from my pleasant dream lest it should all prove to be illusion."

There was a moment's pause, but it was filled by the stringed band, who, having ended Kuhner's Valse, now began to play "Sweet spirit, hear my prayer." It may be that Gilbert

Ansley deemed it to be suggestive, for he went on to say, "Now that your brother has offered me the living of Melladew, I have both a home and an income to offer her—a sufficiency wherewith to support such an establishment as she might not refuse to accept, although it would be a far humbler one than that to which she has been accustomed. And now that I have told you my tale and confessed my secret, I have but one thing more to say. My acceptance or rejection of the living of Melladew depends entirely upon *you.*"

"Upon *me!*" she said. She was taken by surprise. She looked up to her companion for a moment, and then glanced down again at the cool green wave as it flapped idly against the black beams of the pier. She recalled a hundred little circumstances that corroborated Gilbert Ansley's statement, although at the time she had not suspected that there had been anything in them beyond what might have passed between any two persons in their respective positions. But his confession now gave her the key to much that had occurred, although she had scarcely ever trusted herself to think that it was one and the same key

that would unlock the secrets of their two hearts. "Depends upon me!" she said, and a choking sensation prevented her from saying more.

"Upon you," he replied, as he pressed the hand that she had laid upon the timber against which they were leaning. "It is to you that I have given all the love that my heart has to offer, and I have sometimes dared to hope that I was not altogether indifferent to you. I cannot bring myself to think of accepting your brother's proposal, unless you will suffer me to look forward to that happy time when my home shall be blessed with your presence and presiding care. I could not bear existence in Melladew, unless it was brightened by your love; and if your love is already given to another"—she shook her head, but did not speak—"or, if you cannot be mine, then I should prefer to leave Melladew altogether and drag out my existence in some remote place, where you would not be, to remind me of all that I had loved and lost. And now, my own heart's dearest and only love—for such you are to me, even though you forbid me to call you so—you know upon what terms the balance of my fate hangs. May I accept the rectory of Melladew?"

She looked up from the cool green wave to the dying glories of the sunset, and then frankly gave him her hand, and said, "You may!" There was no need, as yet, to say much more. He drew her arm within his own, resting it against his heart; and then, as they leaned closely together on the side of the pier, she turned her fair young face to his, and in her trustful gaze he read the earnest record of his future happiness.

Edgar Melladew always asserted that he and Miss Ansley were not absent from their two companions for a greater space of time than ten minutes, during which they had carefully watched the effect of the roseate glow on the houses in Kemp Town. But, however this may have been, some delicious moments, fraught with blissful fancies, had elapsed before Edgar and Miss Ansley walked round the pier-head to the spot where Helen and Gilbert Ansley were standing.

"'Sweet spirit, hear my prayer!'" said Edgar, singing the words to the accompaniment of the string-band.

"The prayer has been said, and granted," said Gilbert Ansley. "And now that my only scruple as to accepting your kind offer has been happily

removed, I shall be very glad to be the rector of Melladew. And I beg to present to you the lady who has promised to be my wife, and to rule the rectory, if not the rector."

Whether Helen laughed or blushed most it would be hard to say, as she received their congratulations.

"And," continued Gilbert Ansley, speaking to the young squire; "as you stand to her in a father's stead, I hope that, together with the living, you will give me the sister that will make that living worth more to me than all other preferments in the world."

"I give you the one with as much readiness as I gave the other," said Edgar. "In fact, I had already guessed the state of affairs between you and Nelly, so that I am not altogether taken by surprise by what you have now told me. Perhaps, as such is the case, I was not quite so disinterested as I might have been in asking you to take the vacant living."

And so they left the Chain Pier. And the old Beau-Brummell gentleman who had been watching the two lovers as they leant over the timbers and looked out at the sunset, little thought that

he had been a witness to a bond of union, which, although from its being drawn up in so public a place could not be sealed by the customary kiss, yet was none the less valid, or the less likely to be carried out in its full integrity.

No disclosures were made during the tea at Rock Gardens, and although the newly-affianced lovers did not sit through that meal "like guilty creatures sitting at a play," yet the burden of their secret lay somewhat heavy upon their minds; and they both felt a sense of relief when Gilbert Ansley, who had returned with the Melladews to Cliff Place, begged for a few minutes' private conversation with Helen's mother in the back drawing-room. Helen had slipped up-stairs to her own room; and when her mother there rejoined her, Mrs. Melladew assured her with many kisses, and not a few tears, that the engagement met with her entire approval, and that she was rejoiced to think that they should have her so near to them, and that Mr. Ansley was a truly excellent young man, with whom she could not possibly find the slightest fault, unless, indeed, it was for his name, "which," added the worthy lady, "might possibly make people confuse you with the Mount-

norris Annesleys. And now you had better go down to him, my dear, and say good night. I promised that you should do so."

And Helen went. But of the manner in which she and Gilbert said good night in Mrs. Harpeyden's back drawing-room nothing has transpired. It differed little, perhaps, unless it were in intensity of feeling, from the way in which two young people, similarly situated, say good night, more especially when the words and clinging embraces are accompanied by the first kiss of love.

CHAPTER XIX.

VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

MRS. MELLADEW had thought of bringing her Brighton visit to a close within ten days, and those days were very happy ones, more especially to Helen Melladew and Gilbert Ansley. Being in the recognized light of an engaged couple, they were enabled to enjoy all those privileges of free and uninterrupted intercourse that resulted from the blissful state which, in a lower stratum of society, would have been called "keeping company." And Gilbert and Helen kept company with great constancy and enjoyment, meeting two or three times in each day, and riding, driving, or walking together as the weather permitted, and as their own feelings prompted. To Rottingdean, to Ovingdean, to Stanmer Park, to Patcham, and elsewhere, excursions were made, in which Melladews, Ansleys,

Hardys, and Galloways joined, but in which, whatever the crowd, Helen and Gilbert could always have their private talk, and be all in all to each other.

Ella Hardy usually joined them. She was getting better now, though her arm was still fixed in its splints and supported in a sling. Dr. Tanner Jones had ordered her to be as much in the open air as was possible; and, though she walked but little, she sat on the beach in its least frequented parts, or was drawn in a Bath-chair amid the throng on the promenade and in the town. But when she drove out and accompanied the others in their excursions, it was no little disappointment to one who was so fond of riding that she should be compelled to sit in a fly with her crippled arm supported on a cushion, and be deprived of those glorious canters across the springy turf in which she felt such thorough enjoyment; and when one or other of her female friends brought their Napoleon-blue habits to her side of the carriage for a little pleasant chat, she longed to be well enough to be once again in the saddle, and participating in the exhilarating pleasures that attend upon a gallop over the Brighton

Downs. Edgar Melladew was never very far away from her side, and did all that he could to relieve the tedium of her recovery.

Miss O'Fay had now become so reconciled to Brighton, and had not only found so much that was agreeable to her feelings in the scenes of her youthful days, but had also derived so much benefit from the air, that she had decided upon wintering there. Her niece expressed much pleasure at this decision, although Miss O'Fay feared that St. Paul's and its Mattins had something to do with this pleasure, and only hoped that Ella might not be induced to become one of the so-called nuns, and a companion of Constance Kent "in that nunnery, or home, or hospital, or whatever the people might call it." But she trusted that the opposing influences that she could bring to bear would preserve her beloved niece from what the little lady regarded as contagious harm. She had consulted Mrs. Grimsby Grout on the subject, and that large-hearted lady had given it as her opinion that a vigorous course of tea-and-expounding parties would, under the circumstances, probably be instrumental in meeting the wants of the case. Mrs. Grimsby Grout's system

of cure was, however, for the present postponed, not only on account of Miss Hardy's state of health, but also from the proposal that Mrs. Melladew had made to Miss O'Fay, that she should return with them to Melladew, and let her niece have the benefit of thorough change of air; and this invitation had been accepted.

Notwithstanding that Brighton, more especially during the past ten days, had been very enjoyable to Helen Melladew, yet she was not sorry to quit it, and to exchange its gay turmoil for the quiet repose of the country. Gilbert Ansley also thought it his duty to return to the parish that would soon be his own; and now that Helen was also going there, he could very well defer the holiday that he had anticipated taking, and could exchange it perhaps for a honeymoon. In fact, the time that he had originally proposed for his holiday was drawing to its close, even if the event of his rector's death had not occurred to change its character, and to colour the future working days of his life.

During those last ten days at Brighton many visits were paid to Mutton's, and a few to Mattins. Mrs. Melladew was also more than once lost for

an hour or two, and was discovered at Hannington's making her purchases for the winter. Helen also took the opportunity to go to Child's and other shops, and there, with Gilbert to help her in her selection, bought a store of toys for their school-children and their annual Christmas-tree. Pettifer was presented with a Brighton pebble-brooch and shell workbox, in remembrance of her visit; and similar presents were procured for the other Melladew servants, and for old Mrs. Mudge, the schoolmistress. There was a great deal of buying and bargaining during those last ten days, and Edgar began to wonder in whatever way the constantly-increasing accumulations of baggage would be stored. A new ring had also made its appearance on Helen's engaged finger, and a new locket was hung around her neck; while on Mr. Ansley's watch-chain there appeared a gold locket that enshrined a tress of hair of the colour of Helen Melladew's, together with a second enamelled locket, in which was a coloured photograph, done in Hennah and Kent's best style, for which the same young lady must have sat. These and other *souvenirs* of their Brighton visit were duly treasured.

On the morning of their departure, Mrs. Harpeyden, in thanking Mrs. Melladew for her patronage, and expressing a hope that she had given satisfaction, presented her with a small pack of her advertising cards, trusting that she might not be presuming too much in asking Mrs. Melladew to recommend her friends, when they visited Brighton, to take apartments at 105, Cliff Place, commanding an excellent sea-view, and most salubriously and pleasantly situated in a quiet street, the domestic arrangements being presided over by one who, although by the dispensation of Providence compelled to let apartments, yet as being a Myth, and the great-niece of that eminent theologian who was dean of St. Vitus's, and closely connected, moreover, on her father and husband's side, with two of the learned professions, was intimately acquainted with the habits and requirements of that class of society whose patronage she sought. Mrs. Melladew promised Mrs. Harpeyden that she would distribute her pack of cards to the best advantage, and would recommend her to her friends; and the black cat, Smoke, who was rubbing round his mistress's skirts, appeared to participate in her satisfaction.

And so they bade adieu to Cliff Place. Miss O'Fay and Ella Hardy were already at the station, together with Gilbert Ansley and Edgar Melladew, who had gone on in another car with Pettifer and the mountain of luggage. While he was getting the tickets, a shabby-genteel looking man, whose red face and grog-blossomed nose seemed distressingly familiar to Helen, sidled up to her in the crowd, and said, in a dry, hiccuppy voice, as he placed his forefinger knowingly to the side of his nose, "Mum's the word, Miss *hic*-Melladew! I gave the slip to the old *hic*-cat, meaning my sister, and determined to seek a last *hic*-interview. Time is precious, *hic*, and all I have to say is, *hic*, any time that is convenient for Gretna, a *hic*-line addressed to me at Mrs. *hic*-Harpeyden's, one hundred and *hic*-five Cliff Place, will find me and be *hic*-punctually attended to. John is the soul of *hic*-honour, and will ride on the box-seat till after the *hic*-ceremony." A heavily-laden porter, with a rough and ready "by-your-leave," thrust by him and separated him from Helen: and the last that she saw of the gentleman who had anticipated Mr. Ansley in proposing for her hand in marriage, was, that the "soul of honour" was lying

where he had fallen, or rather lurched, on a pile of fish-baskets, of which, perhaps, he was thought to be the proprietor, and therefore was not interfered with by any of the railway officials.

There was no need to see Dr. Fleam as they passed through the town. Even Mrs. Melladew did not suggest that a call at Pulsover Street, Cuppington Square, was necessary; for Helen was evidently in such excellent health and spirits, that there could be no pretence for entrapping her into a recital of the magic word Nine at Dr. Fleam's dictation. Nevertheless, her mother greatly plumed herself on her tactics in having taken Helen to Brighton; and always spoke of the very beneficial effects that her daughter had derived from the climate of the queen of British watering-places. It was very evident to her that Mr. Johnson had been perfectly correct in recommending a sojourn in the sheltered western portion of Brighton, as being very beneficial in incipient cases of pulmonary consumption; and the benefit that had resulted to Helen from having followed his advice confirmed Mrs. Melladew's good opinion of their surgeon. It was clear to her maternal eyes, that, although her daughter

might term Mr. Johnson by the opprobrious epithet "Old Pillbox," yet that he had been quite right in his diagnosis of her case, and that Helen's system had gained tone from her visit to Brighton. And as, for her own part, Helen's reminiscences of Brighton were so agreeable, she did not take the trouble to prove her mother in the wrong; therefore the worthy lady had the great satisfaction of enjoying her own opinions and promulgating them without contradiction.

They reached Meladew in safety, and the mistress of the manor saw with satisfaction that all the preserving and other household matters that she had ordered to be done during her absence had been properly carried out according to her instructions. After the experience of the Brighton lodgings, and the noises and disorder that, from early morn to dewy eve, awoke the echoes of that quiet street, Cliff Place, they were glad to find themselves among the manifold home comforts of the manor. And if one circumstance more than another could have added to their pleasure in exchanging the fashionable watering-place for the Hopshire home, it was to be found in the gratifying reflection that no fish-fags, torture-grinders,

and nigger vocalists, could come under their windows at all hours of the day, asking them if they wanted prawns, or wishing they were in Dixie. From such distractions the heavenly calm and quiet of the country was indeed a change and a solace.

But, on the whole, the visit to Brighton had been thoroughly enjoyed, and was full of pleasant recollections; and, of all the spots in its gay and attractive town, its Chain Pier was that which was most frequently recalled to Helen Melladew's thoughts with the most agreeable remembrances and associations. To her brother, the Dyke and the Dyke-house were oftener, perhaps, the subjects of reminiscence; and Edgar thought of a sentence in *Lavengro* that ran to this effect—"Go to Brighton, and remain there a month or two; at the end of which time you can return with your mind refreshed and invigorated, and materials, perhaps, for a tale or novel." He had now returned from thence, with materials, as he felt, for a romance, which he fondly hoped would prove to be reality.

Miss O'Fay and her niece prolonged their stay at Melladew for one month, by the end of which

time Miss Hardy had not only recovered her usual health, but also a sufficient use of her broken arm to enable her to play at croquet and to join Helen Melladew in her quiet rides through the pleasant Hopshire lanes. Edgar Melladew and Gilbert Ansley were often with them; and, as the engaged couple rode together as a matter of course, and as the narrow lanes would not allow more than two horses abreast, Edgar and Ella were thrown much together, and were on such friendly terms that they seemed to have known each other for years.

They had dined at Sir John Hawley's, and the Hawleys had dined at Melladew; and the Miss Hawleys and the Gattertops had joined them in a picnic and in two croquet parties; and it was after the second of these occasions that Ella Hardy, who had previously refrained from mentioning the subject, chiefly because Helen had not spoken of it to her, said to her friend, as they strolled together in the garden, "What a nice sister Miss Hawley will make you?"

"What!" exclaimed Helen, her eyes rounding with wonder.

"A sister; or, to be more precise, a sister-in-law," replied Miss Hardy.

"Why, my dearest Ella! what *do* you mean?" said the wondering Helen.

"Is not your brother engaged to Miss Hawley?" asked Ella.

"Engaged to Miss Hawley!" echoed Helen, in surprise. "Why, my dear Ella, wherever did you hear this?"

"At Brighton," she replied.

"Oh!" said Helen, with a sigh of relief, as she took her seat in a trellised arbour, and made room for Ella by her side, "I was beginning to be afraid, from your manner, that the affair had occurred to-day. Why, my dear Ella, it is all a mistake. Edgar is far more likely to be engaged to——. But, how did you hear it?"

Then Ella told her what Mrs. Melladew was supposed to have said to Miss O'Fay as to the young squire of Melladew being engaged to the daughter of their friend and neighbour, Sir John Hawley. She had often been on the point of speaking of it to Helen, but had waited for her friend to first mention the subject; and as, of course, Helen could not do this, Ella had kept silence.

She had barely made her explanation, when

Edgar himself appeared in front of the arbour, and his sister at once cried out to him: "Just fancy, Edgar! Ella has been under the delusion that you were engaged to Georgie Hawley."

"So I find," laughed Edgar: "for, I chanced to overhear Miss Hardy's last words, as I came round by the laurels."

"Then I shall leave you to give your own denial to the accusation," said Helen, as she jumped up and turned away from the trellised arbour.

"Helen!" cried Ella. But Helen had scampered off, and Edgar was standing in front of the arbour, as though he would prevent Ella's escape. Her position was somewhat embarrassing.

"I am glad to remove a false impression from your mind," he said, as he leaned against the trellised entrance of the arbour. "How long had you fancied this?"

"From the day after we first met you," she answered.

"And you believed it?"

"Yes! Why should I not?"

"But do you believe it now?"

"No! if you say that it is not true."

"It is not true," said Edgar, with quiet ear-

nestness; "and it was never true at any time. My heart was wholly free when I first met you at Brighton. Since then it has been free no longer. For many days past I have been intending to speak to you and tell you all that I felt towards you. But, coward-like, I put it off, afraid to meet with a refusal. I thank Nelly for now precipitating my avowal. Miss Hardy—Ella! I love you honestly and truly, and I love no other. I have loved you ever since I saw you. Do you believe me?"

"I believe that you are speaking what you now feel," she answered.

"And your love—can it be mine? do you return my love?" he pleaded.

"I—I can scarcely answer you," she replied. "This avowal has come upon me very unexpectedly."

She seemed greatly agitated as she bent her head before him the while he stood leaning against the trellis. "Be my wife, Ella!" he said, in words that were low but clear, and thrilled her as he spoke. "Be my wife! If you must leave us now, yet promise me that you will return here as my bride. Perhaps I am asking an impossibility,"

he added, as he did not receive any response to his question, and perceived her agitation. "You are, perhaps, already engaged to another?"

"No," she murmured.

"Then, your love is not given to another? tell me that at least."

"It is not," she faltered.

"And am I altogether indifferent to you, Ella?" he asked. "Cannot you give me a word of hope?"

She mastered her agitation by a great effort, and answered him slowly and calmly, but without trusting herself to meet his glance. "You have been drawn into this avowal when you were unprepared to make it. When you come to think it over in your calmer moments, you may be sorry that you have made it."

"Never! never!" he cried impulsively.

"You have known me but a short time," she continued.

"Yet long enough to have decided my fate," he said.

"And," she went on, "it is right to remind you that I am very poor."

"But rich in charms and wealthy in good qualities!" he cried.

She did not appear to pay heed to his words, and continued her previous sentence—"and that your mother and friends are but just in their expectation that you should marry one who is at least in the position of Miss Hawley."

"You are better than a hundred Miss Hawleys, and as well born," cried Edgar, as he tore off a branch of honeysuckle from the trellis with a convulsive clutch that may have been an evidence of the passion of love, but was probably also an outbreak of temper; "for," he continued, "though I hope to please my mother in my marriage, yet I look, first of all and before all, to please myself and my wife. Besides," he went on, in a somewhat calmer tone, "I feel quite sure that my mother would approve of my present choice; and you know how warmly attached Nelly is to you. Do give me a word of hope, Ella! Say, at least, that you will try to think well enough of me to let me call you mine at some future day, and one, I hope, that is not far distant."

"It would be wrong in me," she said, with her head still bent and her looks averted from his, "it would be wrong in me to encourage hopes which might never be realized."

"Oh, do not say so!" he pleaded. "If I have spoken to you too suddenly, and pressed for an answer that you are not yet quite prepared to give, defer to give me that answer for a few days; or, if you would rather do so, write to me from Brighton."

"It would be useless," she replied, "My answer would be the same as it is now. Think no more of me, Mr. Melladew, except as a friend, —as a sister, if you will; but no more." And she rose to leave the arbour.

"Dearer than any sister!" he exclaimed, as he sought to restrain her. "You can never be aught else to me. I have never asked any other to share my lot in life, and my life should be devoted to making yours happy."

"Do not pain me by prolonging this conversation," she said, in a tearful tone, and with a look of extreme sadness, that overclouded the sunny beauties of her face. "I thank you deeply and sincerely for your feelings towards me, and I beg that you will not think me unmindful of them, although circumstances compel me to decline your proposal. We must needs meet again before we leave Melladew; but let it be only as before, and

as though this interview had never been. Good-bye, Mr. Melladew; may God bless you with His best blessings!"

He impulsively caught the hand she offered him and pressed it to his lips, saying, "You would be the best blessing that He could give to me."

She disengaged her hand and swept past him.

"Ella, come back to me, and bid me live for you!" he cried. But she was gone. And, as though crushed with the weight of a heavy blow, Edgar sank down on the arbour-seat, from which Ella had just risen, and covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER XX.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"THANK God!" thought Ella, as she made her way back to the house and gained her own room undisturbed; "thank God, I have conquered my own rebellious nature; but I was sorely tried. His dream of love will soon be over; his short-lived fancy will soon die out; and, when he is happily married to another, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I did not stand in his path, but left him disentangled, and free to choose a wife better suited to his position and fortune."

Ladies who are in love, no less than gentlemen, will occasionally fall into error and make very grave blunders; and Ella Hardy had done so in rejecting Edgar Melladew's proposals. For, although they had altogether taken her by sur-

prise, yet she knew very well that if she consulted her own feelings only, she would have fully secured her own happiness by accepting Edgar's offer. But she fell into the grave error of supposing that he was greatly led away by the impulse of the moment—consequent upon the situation in which his sister had placed him—to exaggerate his own opinions of the feelings that he entertained towards her; and that, having once committed himself to a definite proposal, he felt unable to retract his words. She imagined, too, that, situated as he was, the handsome, well-born, and wealthy young squire, who could choose his wife from among the ranks of the rich and ennobled, she should be doing him a wrong to take advantage of his precipitation, and to saddle him with a wife who had no particular social position to boast of, who had no prospects for the future, and whose present income and fortune amounted to her miserable annuity of three-and-twenty pounds a year. Perhaps her good looks had won his favour, and the daily intercourse that had passed between them had deceived him into the belief that he cared for her more than for any other friend or visitor. But when she was gone

away from Melladew, he would soon discover his mistake, and would then be thankful to her for sparing him from an engagement into which he had been unwittingly drawn.

So she reasoned; or, rather, such were the thoughts that swayed her in her reply to Edgar's proposals. For if she had brought her clear judgment to reason calmly on the words and character of the speaker, she would not have arrived at false conclusions; but for the present her mind was too agitated to permit her taking a quiet view of the subject that had been so suddenly and unexpectedly brought before her. She felt herself to be called upon for an immediate decision, and, suffering her self-denying nature to supersede her better judgment, she pronounced, as she imagined, for the life-good of him to whom her heart had been secretly given, and to promote whose earthly welfare she was perfectly ready to sacrifice herself.

It was a grave error for Ella Hardy to make, although it was her own unselfish disinterestedness that chiefly brought it about, and although, in so doing, she was voluntarily punishing herself. But it might have caused years of misery,

not only to herself, but to the man whom she loved best upon earth.

On leaving Edgar she had entered the house and gained her own room, without being hindered by any one whose conversation would have jarred upon her excited frame of mind. Overcome by the conflicting emotions that agitated her even to unaccustomed tears, she had thrown herself upon the sofa, when, with a preliminary tap of warning, Helen Melladew entered the room. It was in vain for Ella to conceal her tears.

"My poor Ella!" said Helen, kneeling down by her side and throwing her arms around her so as to bring her face close to hers: "What is the matter? What have you been doing?"

"My duty," sobbed Ella.

"And you are consoling yourself with our womanly resource—a good cry," said Helen, kissing her forehead. "What a disagreeable duty it must have been!"

"Duty is not always pleasant," said Ella.

"Well, perhaps not," rejoined Helen, willing to yield this point and not to discuss anything that might drift into metaphysics. "But I wonder what the present unpleasant duty may

have been? I left you with Edgar. Surely he has not told you that what I said about his not being engaged to Georgie Hawley was incorrect?"

"No, Nelly!" faltered her friend; "it was quite true."

"He made that quite clear to you, did he?" asked Helen.

"Yes."

"And I think that he must have made something else quite clear to you," said Helen, as she half sat, half knelt, beside her friend, and taking Ella's hands from her tear-bedewed face, placed them round her own neck, while she looked closely into her eyes, and said, "Now, I am your father confessor, Ella, and you must answer me truly. Did not Edgar tell you that he loved—not Georgie Hawley, but another young lady."

"Yes," replied Ella, but with downcast eyes.

"And," continued Helen, "that he wished that other young lady to be his wife?"

"Yes," again replied Ella.

"And," asked Helen, with a bright inquiring look, "do you know what was the young lady's reply?"

"She declined his offer." And Ella spoke

clearly, and, raising her eyes, looked steadfastly at Helen.

It was Helen's turn to drop her gaze; and she sank her head in Ella's lap. "Poor Edgar!" she said, after a brief silence, broken only by Ella's sobs; "poor fellow! this is a hard blow to him, indeed. Oh! Ella, I have thought so much that it would all be as I wished, and that I should have you for my sister. I fancied that you loved him. I never suspected that you loved another."

"I do not," sobbed Ella.

"And you love Edgar?" and Helen looked up quickly into her face.

"I do indeed," she replied.

"And yet you refused him. Oh, Ella! what have you done?"

"My duty!" sobbed the miserable girl.

"Your duty, Ella!" echoed Helen sternly. "No! do not call such conduct by so sacred a name. You have done a great wrong both to Edgar and to yourself. How came you to take such a strange course?"

"I did not want to entangle him," she pleaded; "I am so poor—I——"

"Ella," interposed Helen, "you are wronging

Edgar by such thoughts. He is not a fickle character, to be swayed by every pretty face into a fresh fancy. I love him almost as much as I love dear Gilbert; and I know him, I suppose, still better. He would never have declared to you a love that he did not feel, or asked you for that which he would not have treasured with his whole heart through all his life. Oh, Ella! I did not think that I should have to reproach you, but I do indeed blame you. I blame you for throwing aside, without a just cause, the best gift that a good man could offer you. Why should you needlessly pain him in this way, and plunge a dagger into his heart? cruel Ella!" In her zeal and affection for her brother, Helen was well-nigh forgetting that her friend might have been also plunging a dagger in her own heart.

I am so sorry for him," sobbed poor Ella. "I did not think that he would much care about me after I was gone."

"Then you ought to have known it," said Helen, somewhat hotly. "Edgar has the tenderest and truest heart of any man that I ever knew,—even my own darling not excepted." Then, as the thought of Gilbert Ansley stole over

her, it softened her again to her accustomed sweetness; and, as she kissed her friend's forehead, above the hands that vainly concealed the bitter tears, she said, "My poor Ella! and you too have suffered."

"I have, indeed," she replied. "Do not think me thoughtless or unfeeling, dear Nelly; I fancied that I was acting for your brother's good. God knows my heart's bitterness in that which I have done." And a fresh burst of sobs prevented her from saying more.

"And you do love Edgar? you do! you do!" cried Helen, kissing Ella again and again, as rapturously even as Edgar himself could have done, had he been in his sister's place.

"I do!" answered Ella, crimsoning under the kisses and confession.

"Oh!" cried Helen, joyously; "if you can't go to him at once, let me go, Ella, as your deputy, and spare him further pain by telling him the motives that swayed you to a refusal. Let me! may I, dearest sister?"

Ella was sobbing so bitterly, that she could not, at once, make any reply; but she returned Helen's embrace; and, for some few minutes,

they so continued, locked in each other's arms. Then Ella said, between her sobs, "Yes, Nelly! tell him. Ask him to forgive me."

Helen Melladew needed no further instructions. She hastily bathed Ella Hardy's hot forehead and swollen eyes; and then she ran out to seek for Edgar. She found him where she had left him, in the little trellised arbour, where he sat looking the picture of misery.

"She loves you! she loves you! Ella is yours!" cried Helen excitedly.

It was as the reprieve to the condemned criminal; though, for a few moments, Edgar could not credit its genuineness. When defeat is suddenly and unexpectedly turned into victory, the beaten general may be excused if, for an instant, he should doubt his good fortune. Edgar heard it now, however, from the lips of his sister; and within an hour he had heard it a second time, from the lips that had the best right to tell it.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

HELEN MELLADEW and Gilbert Ansley were married on the appointed day; and, although Edgar did all he could to fix his own wedding for the same day, and at the same place and hour, yet the ladies, including his mother and Miss O'Fay, declared that the affair must not be thus precipitated; and, as his expectant bride was of the same opinion, he had to appear at his sister's wedding in the guise of the father, and Ella Hardy as one of the six bridesmaids, of whom the other five were the bridegroom's sister, Kitty Galloway, the two Misses Gattertop, and Miss Hawley. The wedding went off famously, and was treated as a village festival. Mr. Johnson came to the breakfast, and was enabled once more to testify that the bride's system had gained tone, and that the tendency to pulmonary disease had been effectually checked by

the visit to Brighton. Mrs. Mudge and the school-children were feasted under a tent on the lawn, when they had assisted in pelting with old shoes the retiring carriage of the bride and bridegroom; and Dibbles, the steward, presided over a dinner given to the tenants and workpeople on the Squire's estate.

By the time that the happy pair had returned from their honeymoon tour, the alterations at the Hall were quite completed, and had so metamorphosed the appearance of the house that poor Mrs. Mudge would scarcely have known it. He might have been scandalized, doubtless, at the total removal of all those brass-rubbings on which Mrs. Mudge had set so much store; but their absence certainly gave the hall, staircase, and rooms a more cheerful look, and the visitor could now retire to bed without being frightened by the series of skeleton-looking outlines on their black and pall-like grounds. All these had been taken possession of by the late rector's brother, together with the furniture; and every vestige of its late occupant had been removed. A portion of the lawn had been altered for a croquet-ground; and, in a pretty little up-stairs room, set apart for Helen's

peculiar sanctum and boudoir, one of the frames upon the walls held the long photographic view of Brighton from the Chain Pier, of whose original the rector of Melladew and his wife had very pleasant memories. Miss Pettifer, at the particular request of herself, and with her young mistress's full concurrence, had been transferred from the establishment at the manor to that of the rectory; and Helen's Dandie Dinmont, "Pepper," had also been brought there to make friends with "Fidget," the black-and-tan terrier. Gilbert Ansley was enabled to carry out his projected night-school, and to receive therein the aid of his wife, who proved herself to be equally as excellent and loveable in her new character of the parson's wife as she had been in that of the young squire's sister.

As for Dibbles, the steward, he no longer lamented that the old squire had not appointed "sponsible trusses" for the guidance of his young master; but, as the months rolled on, and he became better acquainted with Edgar's views and their practical development, he gradually reconciled himself to the steam-plough and all those other matters which had formerly been

regarded by himself and the parish-clerk as direct evidences of the infidel and rationalistic tendencies of the age, and of the combined influences of Colenso and the "Essays and Reviews," together with the posturings and monkeries and the going dead agen' the Scriptures. Although, doubtless, the worthy Dibbles still "conceited hisself" that he was the presiding genius of the Melladew estate, yet he no longer considered Mr. Edgar in the light of an infant pleased with new toys. To those "sore "innovations," which he had not "flattered," he, in common with the labourers, had now become so accustomed, that they began to wonder how they could possibly have gone on for so long a time without their aid. It was clear that Dibbles's shrewd and safe prophecy, that Mr. Edgar would be older in a year or two, was in a fair way of being fulfilled to the satisfaction and benefit of all who lived upon his estate, and the old steward's belief that the young master's heart was in the right place was also consistent with pathology and sentiment.

It certainly was in the right place; but it throbbed now with a newly-found delight. The only improvement of which the estate seemed to

be capable, was that its proprietor should take unto himself a wife. But the young squire was condemned to wait through the long months of winter before this happy consummation of his plans and fruition of his joys was permitted to come to pass. Although Ella had agreed to be his wife, yet she stipulated that six months should elapse before he should claim her hand; and Mrs. Melladew and Miss O'Fay applauded her decision. Neither of them were in favour of a too short engagement, but considered that "the young people" should have time to think and look around them; and if they were disposed to change their minds, to have the opportunity to do so before they had taken the irrevocable step.

But although, after many fruitless efforts to persuade Ella to reverse her decision and cut the six months down to two or three, Edgar had quietly acquiesced in the arrangements, yet, as he never betrayed the faintest intention or desire to change his mind, it is to be supposed that his love for Ella was firm, and that his heart was where Dibbles had signified it to be—in the right place. During the six months of probation he must have spent a little fortune in railway tickets from Hopshire to

Brighton, and from Brighton to Hopshire, and must have become well known to all the officials on the various lines between the two places. With the exception of a month at Christmas, which Miss O'Fay was persuaded to spend at Melladew, together with her niece, the little lady passed her days, with Ella as her companion, in those rooms at 52, Cliff Place, where Edgar had caught his first glimpse of the Beauty of Brighton. And there Edgar was a frequent visitor, taking up his quarters at the "Bedford," as he had done in former days. Miss O'Fay was prudent without being a prude, and she was discreet enough to allow Edgar and Ella to enjoy each other's company without the constant attendance of a third person. And so, during the most fashionable season of the most fashionable of watering-places, they once more took their pleasure in Brighton, in walks and rides, in which the spot of Ella's accident was more than once visited.

When the Christmas-tree and treat were given to the Melladew school-children, the toys and gifts which had been purchased for it by the rector and his wife in Brighton were greatly increased by a goodly box of presents that Edgar

and Ella had also procured from the same alluring shop. And before the Christmas season was over all the Malladew people had become so well acquainted with Miss Hardy, and had formed so high an opinion of her kindly and amiable qualities, that they were very anxious for the time when that beautiful young lady, with her stately grace and peach-bloom loveliness, should be no longer a visitor to the manor, but their young squire's wife.

And if the tenants and neighbours were anxious for the time, the young squire himself was something more than anxious. And yet, long as the time seemed in many respects, it passed rapidly away, for much had to be done in it. Edgar's mother had to be provided for, Mrs. Melladew insisting that it was in all cases preferable for a young couple to make their start in life unfettered by a mother or mother-in-law. And so a small but very pretty and complete house was fitted up for her at no very great distance from the rectory and the manor, which was thenceforth to be her home, and where she would be within reach of her two daughters whenever they required her aid or guidance. Miss O'Fay had also declined

Edgar's invitation that she should take up her abode at the manor, for she fully agreed with Mrs. Melladew's opinion, although her severance from her niece would be to her but little short of a calamity. But the little lady had been schooled in suffering, and was accustomed never to mention her private sorrows but in her private prayers, and she therefore made no trouble, as the saying is, of losing Ella, but assisted her in all her wedding preparations with that cheerful pleasantness of manner that had so often solaced Captain Hardy in those far-away Torquay days when the Fairy O'Fay had herself been the Beauty of Brighton. Her aunt's satisfaction reconciled Ella to the step that she was taking in thus leaving one who had been to her almost more than a mother; and Miss O'Fay met Edgar's proposition by promising to pay them a long visit at the manor at least twice in the year, and, for the rest of the year, pitching her tent in Brighton, Torquay, or some other sea-side place, where they might, in their turn, be her visitors.

And so, long as were the six wintry months of probation, yet they passed away more rapidly than had been at first thought possible, and much was

accomplished in them, and still more was looked forward to. And at last, when the lilacs had bloomed, and the ash-buds had turned from black to green, and the bright spring days had come, then there also came with them the wedding-day of Edgar Mellador and Ella Hardy.

But after all they were not married at Mellador, as Edgar had at first wished, and where a tremendous demonstration of respectful joy, and an overpowering outburst of flowers, garlands and triumphal arches, would have attended their nuptials—but, by the wish of the future bride, whose lightest wish was law, the marriage took place at Brighton, where, as the home of Mattins was not licensed for weddings, the ceremony was performed at the parish church "by the Rev. Gilbert Ansley, rector of Mellodew, and brother-in-law of the bridegroom." And the carriages came from Silverthorne's, and the breakfast from Mutton's. And Mrs. Harpoyden attended the ceremony, where her only distraction was caused by the unexpected appearance (in the next pew) of poor John, who had also gained intelligence of the event, and who, being "the soul of honour," abstained from thrusting himself on Mrs. Ansley's

attention—although she looked almost as charming as the bride herself—and did not grudge Edgar Melladew the happy fate of being married to the Beauty of Brighton.

THE END.

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